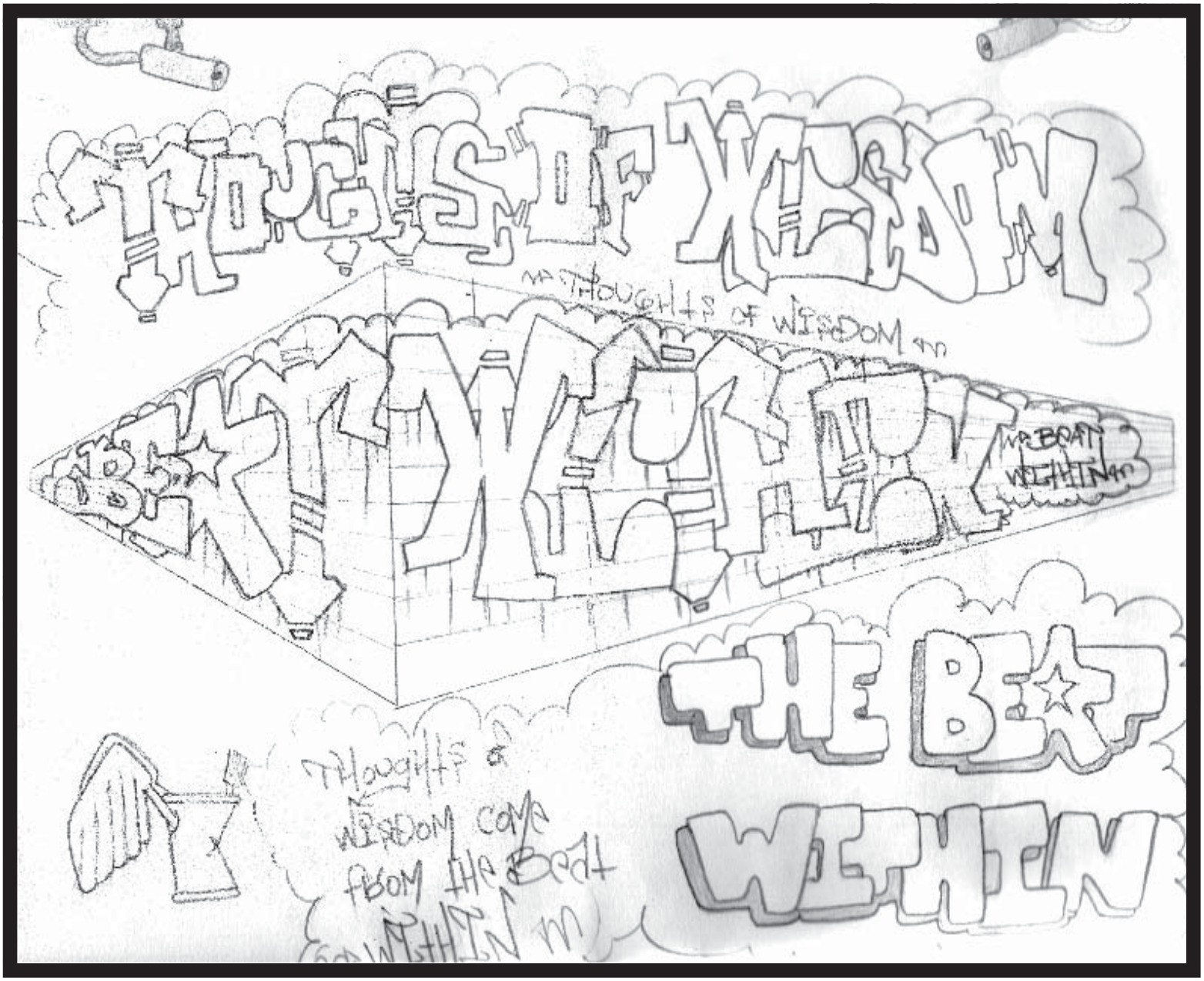


I came back because of my kids and myself, because I want to be clean, so that I can take care of my kids. I ran away because of stress. I lost my mind and I found it while I was gone, so I came back to do the right thing.

read the rest of LaRonda's POW on page 5

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.14

Hello Beat editorial note readers, we're back! Yes indeed, we had a well deserved break in the action (week off from workshops), and now we are ready, as Emeril would say, "to kick it up a notch." So be prepared for some big changes in the coming weeks, from the weekly publication to the workshops.

Don't forget if you are moving on from the hall, going to the ranch, a group home, boot camp, CYA, county jail or prison, better yet, h-o-m-e, to please keep in touch! Write us! Call us! We would love to hear from you and of course we would love a story or two sharing with us the next chapter of your life. Ok...? Also in that letter you send, demand your Beat Within and support and pass along the greatest rawest weekly publication on the planet! Let the community, your friends, your teachers, your POs and lawyers know what's real!

Moving right along, here's something this editor hardly ever does, and that's writing a thank you and appreciation note to our colleagues (and friends) who make this great work possible for all of us. First in line has to be the executive director of Pacific News Service and cofounder of The Beat Within, Sandy Close, who has played a huge part in making The Beat Within the publication it is today. If it wasn't for her believing in this editor, who knows where many of us would be today, seriously, she is the one who helped open the door to what we all know and have come to expect every single week, The Beat Within. We love The Beat!

There are so many people to thank, but we'll thank the heavy-hitters who are still in the trenches doing this work on the daily, and when we say daily, yes even on weekends at the house, or on the late night tip behind their computer typing and typing and typing away, The first person who comes to mind is the O-G of The Beat Within, Michael Kroll. For some of you readers you have the opportunity to have him as a facilitator, and others, well you get his responses to your pieces each week, or his letters in response to your letters you send us, we tell you, this man has been an advocate of the incarcerated for many, many years. He knows the criminal justice system inside out and he knows you writers oh too well too.

With that said, lets thanks two other old school Beat facilitators/editors in Dennis Morton and Allan Tinker who think and breathe The Beat around the clock. You couldn't ask for two better teachers. These two men are as dedicated as they come. Every week rain or shine they are in their units. Every week their edits are in on time. Thank you gentlemen.

Also, we cannot forget another solid veteran in Sheerly Avni, boy oh boy, or is that girl oh girl, this gem of a teacher has been a part of The Beat for the longest time too. She is as dependable as they come when her successful career as a writer/journalist doesn't get in the way. We're also glad we never chased her away back in the day. She is a real believer and fixture in this mess, as is Pauline Craig, who would if she could do anything for you writers even when she shouldn't, if you know what we mean. Pauline is another key player, especially during crunch time. The lady can type.

Now we can't forget Manen Pau, this man is, the man! This quiet no nonsense gifted artist is key, and vital to you all reading this publication, because he is the designer, he is the one who lays out and helps create The Beat Within every single week! He is also the man responsible for the website, so yes indeed we love Manen and the work he does for us all. Thank you buddy!

Of course The Beat Within is a team effort from the workshops to the production end of things. The following players were once participants in our workshops and avid contributors, who now play key roles in all aspects of our work, from the office, to the hall, to the community, they are Will Roy, Siliva Mortenson, Perry Jones, Allan Martinez, Brittany Bernard, Omar Turcios, Mervyn Wool, Roy Hodgson, and Nick Jones. Talk about role models and success stories!

There is so much appreciation to go around, but before we dig into our archives (if we go there), let us thank our wonderful volunteers, Nancy DeMartini, Jen Clarke, Caitlin Urie, Brahmani Houston, Kathleen Large, Patricia Johnson and Zoe Torres, all of these incredible individuals play big roles in helping get The Beat Within out every single week.

It is hard to believe how many people have come into The Beat Within offices and have played vital roles in our program over the years. Some by default, others whom it was their mission to connect with us, and that they did, from the many designers, from Travis Lea, Kris Schell, to the amazing Cliff Parker, Yvette Coronado, Efty Sharony, to Eric Strenger and Chris Gonzales. All these people have played a part in laying out this work, going to workshops, typing and editing too. Speaking of strictly typing and editing, there's a host of facilitators and editors, too many to name, who have come in for a few weeks to those who have spent many years editing and going into the hall, especially recent powerhouses who left us for bigger and better things, such as the likes of Donna Hunter, Arlene Mitri, and Matt Melamed.

In truth, we have been very fortunate. There have been so many and still to this day, good souls who make this work a part of their lives. Not to sound corny, but this editor constantly pinches himself when reminiscing on this very special program. Who would have ever known we would grow to this capacity?

Well, it's been a lot of hard work. It's been relentless. We not only create one weekly, we create two, or should we say three publications each week! The third being a special Hillcrest insert.

We go into close to fifty workshops a week to touch lives and give you writers/readers a voice, an outlet.

We are on a mission to tell the world about our work! We are presently working on three books besides the weeklies. We are constantly trying to figure out ways to make money, to see this program live on for years and years to come. There is nothing like it in the world! We are also currently working on ways to get into juvenile halls throughout the country. By the way, we will be visiting several juvenile hall facilities around the country sometime this year to implement The Beat Within model too. Yes, we are still in Arizona, thanks in part to the amazing Dr. Scott Hermann and his wonderful staff. Yes we are working on getting a colleague and friend to do weekly workshops in Los Angeles. Yes, we are weeks a way from going out to Rochester, New York. Yes, New Mexico has begun to implement the program in their facilities.

Yes, we are in demand, but we need money to make this happen. Yes, money is an issue. Yes we are going to fight the powers that be and make it. Yes it's 2007 and we're involved, knee deep, and we want you to stay involved, or get involved too! We all need to educate the powerful and the mighty and let them know what we know. We got to fight the powers that be! We need to educate! We need to show the powers that be that we are more than what a police report says, we are way more than what led us to incarceration, and that we can make it in the community as leaders too! With that said, thank you my colleagues, thank you Beat readers of this editorial note.

Peace and respect, see you soon!

Here's this week's topics, "If You Had One Phone Call To Heaven Who Would You Ask To Speak To?" - Would you ask to speak to your Mom, your Dad, Uncle, Aunt, Grandma, Grandpa, Lover, friend, etc. Or maybe some one you never got a chance to meet and you would have liked to meet like Martin Luther King, Mac Dre, 2pac, Abraham Lincoln, or maybe a relative that you never got a chance to meet? What would you ask them? What would you tell them? Write about it. (please be Beat appropriate)

Our second topic, "Young, Innocent Bystanders To Violence..." - Recently there was a random drive by shooting in the bay area, where two young innocent girls were the victims. Unfortunately, one of the girls, a four year old, died due to this incident and the other one remains hospitalized. How does this make you feel knowing they were young and innocent? Most of us have young family members and/or know someone young, does this bring up any sad memories from your own poor choices and/or something you've seen? What comes to mind when reading this topic? Can you contribute or help prevent this violence from happening again? Lastly, what would you say to the families of the victims, or to the shooter/s? We know this a hard topic to share your thoughts on, as it was a hard topic for us to come up with, but we hope you can challenge yourself to write your thoughts.

Last topic but not least, "Describe Your Home Away From Home"- Most people have a home with at least one parent, grandparent, or guardian, but what we're interested in knowing for this topic is what place do you call home away from your regular home. For example: the block, your jail cell, your girl friend's house, your potna's house. Describe your second home and why does it make you feel like home?

Ok, before we call is an editorial note, lets give praise to this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients, they are Koho, Justin, Michael, Lil' Papa, Mya, Lil' Sam, Angel Gator, Diona, Jeff, Monica, NuNu, Goldylocks, and Sunshine all from the 150 Crew. Also we have LaRonda and Angel Kissez from Walden House. Last but not least from SF/YGC we have Ques, Roosevelt, and Kwes.

Until we meet again, this one goes out to our friend Mitchell, from Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall who left us recently to begin his stint in CYA. We encourage you to read his latest piece, that we feature in this week's BWO section of this issue,

All right, power to the people! Fight the power!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co–founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Joanna Lin, Allan Tinker, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Omar Turcios, Mervyn Wool, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clark, Roy Hodgson, Brittany Bernard, Brahmani, Houston, Hanif Bey, Perry Jones, Kathleen Large, Nick Jones, Will Roy, Zoe Torres, Keir Davidson, Belen Nanavarrie, Onsce Vilayngeun, Lupe Rodriquez, Sara Maloney, Siliva Mortenson, and Caitlin Urie.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecewski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs–California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

EDITOR'S NOTE 2
PIECES OF THE WEEK 4
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK 9
STANDOUTS 14
SAN MATEO COUNTY 21
WEEKLY WRITINGS 27
VOICES IN SPANISH 41
THE BEAT WITHOUT 42

Freedom

the home of the brave
and the land of the free
to be brainwashed
by a corrupt government's society
for once i was blind
but now i see
still neglected for the way i look
i see
how we still live in a land
of captivity
so i rebel against
a fascist country
denying my dignity
i try
to visualize myself
free
like a soaring eagle spreads its wings
above the pacific sea
but i'm awakened by a fatal shot
from the rifle of mental
slavery
we're living in the time of "sala ha din"
taking over countries not for religion
but power
and they try
to disguise it by
saying "we're here for democracy"
people supporting the war
saying "these people need justice"
and then the u.s. army is
filled with bravery
this government should be
incarcerated for robbery
murder and treachery
instead they torment
other countries and their indigenous
people
they even torment their own
people
with injustice and misery
i live in a country that seeks to master
all the tricks of illusion
i try to process the word freedom
but every time i try
my mind fills up with confusion
what is freedom
[dedicated to the beat within]

-Koho, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Complain that your brain fills with confusion when you seek to see the meaning of freedom in a land that feeds illusion to the poor so they'll endure the injustice and misery of poverty at home, or volunteer to go fight — kill or die — so the rich can build a pipeline on the other side of the world, for a nation as addicted to oil consumption as a dope fiend is to wantin' his next hit, pop, shot or drink; but judging from this poem, you see clearly enough what's going on at home and abroad. What is freedom? It begins with seeking the truth and shattering the authority of illusion, freeing ourselves and our nation from the delusion that freedom is the slavery of an addict using and hitting a quick lick for his next hit, forget about who he's screwing over to do it. What is freedom? It begins and ends with the truth, great mental destroyer of the law of claw and tooth, for it is bulletproof and will not die in prison nor on a bloody battlefield by any military decision by so-called enemy or so-called friend. Thank you for your poem of liberty. Don't stop writing your prophetic poetry till we're all free — of injustice and poverty — to live in peace and prosperity in the boundless promised land of worldwide harmony through economic opportunity for everybody and his momma, sponsored by all of us in the land of the brave, comma, and the home of the free.

What's Really In My Future?

What's really in my future
Going to school, gettin' a job, or still going out to rob?
What's really in my future?
Walkin' down the street with no heat, worryin' about beef?
What's really in my future?
Layin' in that soft casket bed in the rotation of my friends
What's really in my future?
Still trying to claim a gang and get a bullet to my head?
What's really in my future?
Blamed death by the feds 'cause of the dreads on my head
Or the style that I live or the race that I live?
What's really in my future?
The smell of family cookin' in the house, dust in the house I live in
What's really in my future?
Raisin' my kids with sense so that I don't have to seem 'em in
A hospital bed?
What's really in my future?
Making it to old age, praying to God, hoping I make it to heaven?
What's really in my future?
I can't predict my future, but I can plan my future.

-Justin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "I can't predict my future, but I can plan my future." That's one of the deepest things we've read in a long time, spoken like a person whose lived three or four lives already. You're right, it could go any way. You could change everything around, do it all the way you should, and still get hit by a bus... there's no way of knowing for sure. But there are still things you can control, plan for. We want to ask you to write up what those plans are, how you're going to do it, but instead of doing it straight up in an essay, we hope you bring all your poetic powers into play and give us your plan in the eloquent art form you choose each week. A rhyme, for The Beat, on what it means to plan your own future, write your own future life story. Can you do it?

The Affects

I feel when I get locked up or something bad happens to me it affects many people.

It affects the young and in my family because I have many young kids in my family who look up to me. For them to see the police coming to my house to pick me up they instantly think that it's ok to get in trouble and do bad things. They get the feeling that jail is like another home or a cool place to be, why? 'Cause they seem me there. I don't like young family members that look up to me to visit me in jail at all, it hurts to tell them not to come visit me because I don't want them to see me like this.

It also affects people like your parents, to have them visit you, after all the years that they have raised you and they both know that they didn't raise a felon. It really hurts your loved ones because they be wishing that you were hee have safe under their roof, living right and not living off county food.

One person I would hate to have to see me here is my son. My son was the best thing that ever happened to me. Most people don't know what they are missing out on when they don't tend to their seed. I will. My son he died the day after Christmas. December 26h, That was the day I lost all hope for everything but they say people die to show you that life is too short and precious to let go or lose. RIP Robert Lee Barber.

-Michael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At the end of this marvelous and tragic piece, you say you lost hope for everything when your son died. But you know what? Everything you write before shows that that isn't true. Your hope, and your love, still shine when you talk about your nephews, your nieces, your family, when you reach out to teach your readers about the pain of lockdown. We know your heart was broken by losing your son, but this piece shows that that heart is a big strong one that knows how to love, and will learn how to heal. Your future is still waiting for you.

Ben Laden RIP

Part 1: Rock in a Stone Smash My Heart
Rest in Love Ben Laden above
I close my eyes and pictures flash through my head
just rememberin' my best friend who is now dead.
As I think the only thing seems to come is tears from pain.
Stressing harder than I'm stressing over my case
He's my patna for life, his name will never be erased
I'm dropping tears because a peace of my heart has ripped
But forever in my heart bra, so don't even trip.
Real ninjas feel all my pain as I talk
I feel like I can't even move my legs to even walk
The words in my head don't even seem to come true
Only thing keep flashin' is I wish it wasn't you
I'm doing my best to change for God can save me, to wash away my sins
But now I'm feeling I'm gonna take the devil's hand with the rest of my friends
Anger flying around so much I can't even sleep
Thinking of all my remembering of us now I can't eat
I cried writing this poem, that's real from my heart
I'll always remember you bra' that's on the real.
Now you rest in peace with my brother , which is over me still...

Part 2: Close Until Your New Life Starts
I'm ridin', smashin' tearin' down the block, looking for my friend
Who'll ride and die with me to the end.
I see no face that looks like his face
It was on the news but now I got a case.
Mad walking around inside my cold ass cell.
And if my patna is going deep then I'm goin' deep to hell.
Tears dropping down my face from' my patna dead
It didn't seem real because I didn't want it to hit me while I'm in jail
I'm thinking about twice as much as I do,
Now answers popping inside my head while kickin' on my door with my shoes.
Callin' the old Oakland to let me know it's not true.
And everybody telling me, that's your dude.
Death is the only words going through my ears
As I reach down, but fall out and break out into tears.
Gangsta to death, Ben Laden who's gone but still in hearts,
Close your eyes bra, an' wait until your new life starts.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's a famous line about what it takes to move people with poems that says "No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader." In other words, the only way to move others is to write about the things that most move you with as much brutal honesty as you can. You cried writing this poem, and more than one of us cried while reading it too – that's what a strong heart can do, reach across the infinity of locked doors and separate lives and show others how to feel what you feel. Your boy, who named himself after a famous terrorist and is now a victim of a different kind of terror, moved you to write this, and so part of his spirt lives on in your words. But still, those words are wasted if you can't learn from them. You have a mission now, with all the death you've seen, the loss you've suffered, the right and wrong you've done: Your mission is to thrive. To move on, to escape the brutality of your past and the lies of the street and share your gift with the world, with your son, with yourself.

Young, Innocent Bystanders to Violence

It is always young innocent bystanders to violence whose deaths we grieve the most. It is a shame that these young children don't' see their future lives. They don't even see their teenage lives. They don't live to have kids or know the joys and satisfactions of living good long lives.

It's true that dying young, they don't have to go through any more earthly pain, for they will be in a peaceful place and their spirit will be with their loved ones in heaven, with the parents they left behind when they died as children here on earth. The death of a child is horrible, because the grieving parents go through so much pain. The parents wake up every morning with the spontaneous expectation that their child is still alive, for sleep has temporarily erased the unbearable truth. Then, when they go to their kid's bedroom — it hits them again but like it's just happening all over again, their heart's realization that their child is gone, right now and forever, and the depression starts in.

I know how it is to lose a loved one, because my mother got killed by violence, and that hurt me so badly! But I know she is in a better place now. So, for all the people who have lost a loved one, all I got to say is — keep your head up and be strong! Peace out, Beat, this yo' boy, Lil' Sam. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is no measuring or comparing losses. A parent's loss of a child to a violent death, a child's loss of a parent to a violent death: both are immeasurably painful, and however well the child or parent deals with that loss, doing his/her best to heal over time, the pain will never disappear altogether, and there will always be times it comes back to haunt as vividly as if it just happened. Still, there is something in the human heart that can take such a pain and transform it into a ground for understanding the pain of others — and helping them in their time of need, with advice or just loving empathy. Thank you, Sam, for sharing your love and your pain.

No One Understands

If you were to live my life
Feel my pain see what I see
Maybe then you could understand me
I am me because of you
Dark days and still nights
Trying to be strong took all my might
No one knew the envy in my eye
Was just pride
Deep down inside a troubled child
Wishing someone would let it out
But determined to make my point
So now I'm lost in what's called life
Imprisoned forever
Now that couldn't be my life
No family no guidance no love
Maybe I wouldn't be here I you gave me a hug
Maybe if you showed some affection
No I'm lost in jail with no direction
Asking god for strength to get through it
Momma always said bad time don't last forever
but strong people do
so my head held high
my smile straight out tight
momma no worries
you taught me not to give up without a fight

-Mya, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, this is a piece to be proud of! You tell the story of what goes on inside so many children: what it's like to yearn for affection and feel trapped inside of yourself. You're a talented writer and we hope you do keep fighting for the life you deserve; you obviously have a lot to share with the world.

Run-Away Girl

Man, what's up, Beat? Why the hell did I run from my program, Walden House PSK? But there is a but... I did come back. I came back.

I came back because of my kids and myself, because I want to be clean, so that I can take care of my kids. I ran away because of stress. I lost my mind and I found it while I was gone, so I came back to do the right thing.

-LaRonda, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You reverted to old childhood patterns when you were under all that stress, but then showed just how much you've matured by thinking of your future and your children's future and doing what you had to do. Just keep doing what you're doing, LaRonda, and don't let anything (like love) derail you!

Why We Are Still Slaves

A long time ago, when the Emancipation Proclamation was written, and passed as laws, there was still slaves. Slaves were paid just enough to live off of and sometimes not even that. Just remainders of pigs and bad milk. But the slaves that were freed had to carry documentations that proved they were free. Slave catchers would often harass a free black man and re-enslave him, or imprison him without his patch.

Today it works a little different. The slave catcher is a police officer, and the pass is to find a way through poverty, without drugs and guns which is both government supported. Just as a police officer suspects an ethnicity of selling drugs or just doing anything, is harassed. If the slave catcher thought the slave was a runaway, he is harassed. But if we are foolish enough to fall into the pressure of poverty, we sell drugs, get harassed, then go to jail.

But when we are in jail, we work, we serve food, we do all kinds of jobs to get that extra plate, or extra snack, while our parents pay the county for out time and work. Slave masters got paid for someone else work too.

Just a coincidence? I don't think so. They just have someone else doing the work, and collecting the profits of every job we do for them. That' why we live in a capitalist company now. It was once an imperialist country that absorbed every means of equality the former residents (Native Americans) had. The absorbers were the Europeans. The newly established lower class is the original residents, and now it's up to them to work their way back up. At least that's what the early Europeans thought. It's exactly what the capitalist pigs believe in too. The capitalist system is a cover up for the harsh realities of the effects of imperialism we face today. Plantation owners competed against each other but to do so, they needed more workers and lower pay wages. That's why slaves were paid virtually nothing.

In comparison today, minimum wage is still nothing compared to most high class wages. But most of us living in poverty will either be willing to work these wages or sell drugs to raise our initial income. The only problem with that is our parents will have to pay for every day we spend in jail -- which gives money worked for back to the largest of the capitalist.

The Klansman today wears a tie and a suit, to disguise himself from the untamed eye. They keep the white sheets at home, because we as the oppressed have so much hate for them. But the devil in disguise can tempt us easier than the devil-in-person. Without an education, we're bound to fail. But how many devils in disguise are we allowing to hold us back today? We must figure it out, and fight the power of the oppressor with knowledge.

-Angel Gator, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know, if you take these words seriously, they could actually be your own Emancipation Proclamation. Your announcement to the world – or at least the thousands of people who read the Beat – that you refuse to be a "slave" any longer. What would you have to do to live up to this? What would you have to change? Where would you begin the fight? Some of the proudest episodes in world history come from young men like you, who woke up one day and said they deserved freedom. Malcolm X discovered this on lockdown. Spartacus led a revolt 2000 years ago to free his fellow slaves, Ghandi brought an empire to its knees without firing a shot. In 100 years, will your name be in the history books?

Unborn

If for some reason you don't get to have me in your life, I want you to know that I love you and your mom. Also, I want you to know that I didn't have it all coming up in life. So I did what I had to do to make it on my own because my mom was never there. And when I needed my dad the most, he was in jail.

When he got out he came back into my life, but it was nothing he could tell me because I wasn't the same lil' boy no more. I was hoodstar, meaning I did what I wanted and got what I wanted without help from him. On top of that, whatever I wanted I could get it if I didn't have it.

But living my life as a hoodstar did not have a purpose — until your mom told me we was having you. I was so happy because now I had a reason to live and a reason to care about life and death. So I started going back to school and saving money for me and you and your mom. I wanted us to be a happy family. I wanted us to have a nice house and car. I wanted you to have every thing I didn't. But most of all I wanted you to be happy like the way your mom made me feel.

I used to be mad all time until I met your mom on the back of a bus Oct. 31, 2006. I knew she was the one and soon after, she knew it to.

-Ques U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a wonderful letter to your unborn child, Ques. We see no reason at all that you will not be in his/her life to speak these things directly, but we appreciate how things don't always turn out the way we plan, so getting it down on paper for all time is a very good idea. Even more, we really applaud the fact that you took this pregnancy as a signal to change your life around, to go back to school and do all you can to prepare yourself to have a decent family with a decent life. We don't know what you brought you here this time, but you do know, which means you also know what you have to NOT DO in order to keep the promise you make to your child in this wonderful letter. Don't let your family down.

To My NaNa

Hey
Long time no see. I really wish you was here.
I remember when I got in trouble with my dad and you was all on my case.
You told me to stop acting like I have no home training.
I knew if I could get in trouble I would have you there to help me.
When I felt sad or lost I could call on you.
When I ran away I came back, because I felt that I could hurt you or lose you.
When you passed away my heart changed
I wanted to make everyone feel the pain I was going through.
I felt like I didn't want to do right no more.
I didn't want no one to talk to me.
I didn't want no one to talk about you.
I used to call your number and it would just ring.
Why? Why you had to leave me in a time of need?
Why did you say when ever I need help to call you and you not here.
You not here to hold me.
NaNa can you hear me?
Could you come back?
Can you tell me where I am suppose to go?
When will I be able to talk to you?
When could I call you when I'm having a bad day?
NaNa NaNa NaNa I love you!!!

-Diona, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sure that your NaNa would have wanted to be here for you right now, and forever. The fact is that we can't bring people back, and though grief is a part of healing, at some point we have to take that sadness and rage and do something positive with it. Your NaNa sounds like a strong woman who wanted you to do well for yourself, and you obviously loved and respected her more than most. We hope you take those feelings and put them to work for you—how about making some changes in her memory?

It's Crazy How Life Goes

It's crazy how life goes
Up and down
Side to side
In every which way
Wondering what I'm doing here
Every single day

It's crazy how life goes
From good to bad
To happy to sad
On drugs, then thrown into sobriety
Trying to figure out how to live in this society
There is no such thing as perfection
Yet it seem like we're always being pushed to be just that

It's crazy how life goes
Everything is great
Then your world is falling apart in front of your face
Can't keep up with the crazy pace
Wondering why
I feel the tears burning, but I can't seem to cry
Getting high is on my mind
But I need to unwind

It's crazy how life goes
What is reality?
What is fantasy?
Is any of this real?
I hear the devil whispering in my ear
Things I don't want to hear

It's crazy how life goes
Missing things that caused you the most pain
Wondering what in life am I supposed to gain?
Constantly fighting inner demons
Always trying to get even
I'm sick of breaking the trust
All of it fading away, like dust
I wish I could make this all go away
Trying to find the right things to say
I'm sorry for all the things I've done
Trying to win battles no one could've won
I wake up at night tasting my own tears
Forever running away from my fears
All my legs know how to do is run
So tired and I think I'm done

It's crazy how life goes
Learning how to do right
For once in my life, it's in my sight
My goals, my dreams, everything I want
It's all up to me
The ball's in my court
I'm hear at PSK, getting my life back
Thanking my higher power, I don't need another sac
Starting to get real
Never again would I have to do another deal

It's crazy how life goes
Up and down
Side to side
An' every which way
Wondering what I'm doing here
Every single day

-Angel Kissez, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We were already writing our "From The Beat" response to this fine poem in our head when we came to your last verse. That says it all. Give yourself a little time to soak up some sober thinking and self-analysis so that you'll know it's you who is making the decisions for your life, and not some chemically-induced reality.

Home Away From Home

My home away from home is my friend house. To me, a real home is not only somewhere where you can be safe and relax, but somewhere to get your mind and body right. A home is a place that you can be yourself and let all your emotions out, not just store your things.

The reason I chose my friend house and not my own is because that's where I go when I feel unsafe. My friend house is a place where I can lay my head down when I need to think. In my house or maybe even your house, you can't truly be yourself. That is why I would rather go to my friend's house.

-Roosevelt U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like your definition of the difference between a house and a home. But we're curious to know what you mean when you say that you can't "truly be yourself" when you're at your own home. Why is that?

Calling Heaven

If I had a phone call to heaven, I would call my uncle. The reason I would call my uncle, is because I got a big question. I think I might know the answer already, but I still would like to ask him.

You see my uncle, Thomas Redicer, was killed by the Hayward Police Department. It was a night of tears. He had been on the run his whole life, changing names and hiding out. So I never really got to know him all that well but yet — I still loved him.

He was on the freeway one night and was followed by a cop. I think they were crooked. They blocked off the freeway by the Tennyson exit and had him pulled over. The newspaper most likely didn't tell the whole truth. I think that they had pulled him over and handcuffed him and beat his ass. So my uncle had pulled out a gun and fired, hitting a cop below his vest — and they, in turn, shot him through his eye.

My Uncle Tom had a long history of having illegal firearms. He had been to prison and did not want to go back. I think that is why he opened fire on the officers. Or, it could have been self-defense. That's really my first guess. And that would be the question I would ask him. I would ask the real story about the situation. I think he would probably say they were beating him with cuffs on. I wouldn't be surprised.

Police brutality is very common nowadays. I am of the opinion that they overuse and abuse their power because I have experienced it myself, firsthand. From that day on, I've hated all cops that abuse their authority. So, that is what I would ask my uncle, on my phone call to heaven. In memory of Thomas Redicer. God bless his soul.

-Jeff, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You wrote a great piece! And we understand why that's the question you'd ask your uncle up in heaven. But you need to remember that in heaven, he will be transformed. Seated at the right hand of God, all the error and delusion that blinded him here on earth will have been purged away (perhaps the only hell there is after life is having to face what we've done on earth with eyes open to divine truth: the shame of our own purified hearts is all the punishment there is, and excruciating as it may be, we put off our errors as we would a filthy and worn-out coat on a warm, summer's day, to live forever in the eternal forgiveness and love that is heaven). So those bad cops will be punished in their own hearts when their eyes open on divine love and truth, too. And your uncle will tell you not to wait till after your dead to take heaven into your heart but to live "life on earth as it is in heaven" (in the words of the Lord's prayer) to the best of your ability. And he'd strongly advise you not to make the same mistakes he did. RIP Thomas Redicer: may your eternal spirit inspire your nephew.

A home is a place that you can be

PIECES OF THE WEEK

You Don't Have Ears for Nothing

Today is March 18, 2007. How is that significant? What does that have to do with anything?

I'm sitting at Juvenile hall waiting for a placement so I can cut but if I would have listened three Marches ago I probably would had never endured this.

My momma is a single parent who works two jobs, ain't on welfare and hardly ever gets child support from my dead beat father. She tries to give me everything I could ever need or want, and is going back in forth to court and paying extremely high bills for me to be in a facility that could give two donkeys and a damn about me as long as they're getting paid.

Being the only child is heaven except when you're bored but I gave up heaven to take off on who I was mad at.

Why? 'Cause I needed respect from someone that I'll probably never see again for the rest of my life.

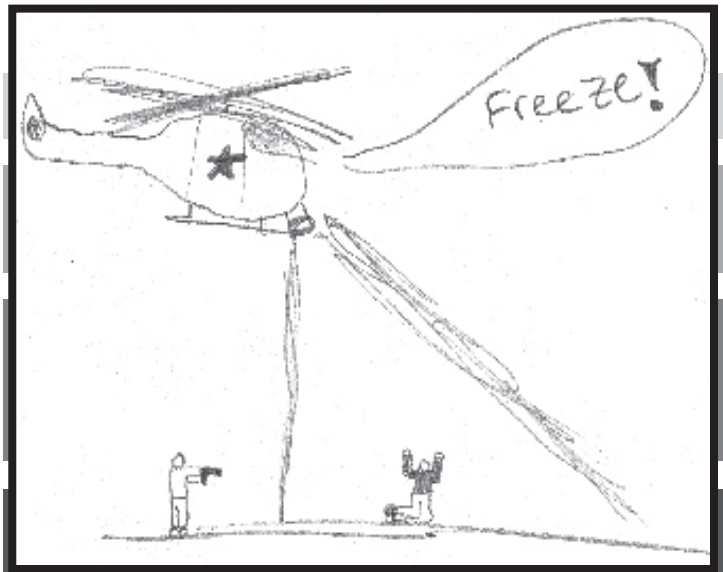
Damn life! They said life was like a box of chocolates, my life on the other hand is far from chocolate, more something like weapons of mass destruction. Maybe if I would've listened I would done as the Romans and not like the Nazi or the KKK.

Today is the first day that I've realized that it only take one chance at death to realize that you only need one ear to hear and being in the situation that I'm in now I know that it's almost over.

I'm almost free. I love you momma.

-NuNu The System Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You may need to change your name, NuNu, because these are not the words of a victim. They are the words of a young woman coming into her own, discovering the hard way who she is and what matters to her. As you write, you are "almost free." The freedom is in the words, the "almost" is in the space between saying them, and living by them. We stand by, expectations high, waiting to watch you fly.



Lessons Learned

I've learned that you don't take life for granted.

Enjoy life while you can, because you don't know when a sucker ass ninja gone take you out.

I also learned from what my mama and I have gone through I learned to not date, interact, or marry a bootsie ninja that beats or goes bad or even to the point when he wants to kill a woman.

-Monica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lesson learned is a lesson shared. We'll make sure this gets big play in The Beat so other young people can hear your wise words. Stay strong sister.

My Girl, Shy Girl RIP

I don't know why they shot her...
she was only 16 and her 17th birthday was a week away...
Various wounds to her body, mostly her upper torso.
Rain pours down as she crawls on the soaked ground.
Reaching out, but to who?
All I can do is stand there, frozen in shock.
When I finally get myself together,
I reach her, hold her.
She dies in my arms.
Her final words were " Tell my daughter I love her and I'm sorry."
She died on 45th and International.
Rest in peace forever Shy Girl!
You memory lasts forever and when I get out (again)
I'm going straight to Oakland to get, Renisha, your baby girl...
missed but never forgotten.
Shy Girl
9-17-1987-9-10-2003

-Goldylocks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What kind of life do you think Renisha will have without her mother? Do you foresee a better life for her, or do you think she's destined to follow in her mother's footsteps? What kind of advice will you offer her, being her mother's close friend and someone who obviously cares about her?

What's Up Beat!

What's up Beat? Well, I been here for about four months and I am about to get a interview by Glen Mill tomorrow! I am excited because I know I am going to get accepted. Well, I hope I do because Glen Mills is going to be a big change in my life. It's going to help me out with my education, career, and have more discipline in the outs.

The only thing that is going to be hard for me in Glen Mills is my family because I'm going to be far away from my family and I'm going to miss them. But when this is all over, I'm going to be glad I went to Glen Mills because I know that my goal of becoming a photographer and make a lot of money is going to be accomplished.

I also hope my little cousin Jimmy I came in with is going to do good too! That's all I have to say Beat.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We always say that the most important ingredient for success in a program is the mental attitude you bring to it. It's obvious that you are ready to move forward with your life in a positive way, and we believe that your attitude will carry you to your goal! When you get to Glen Mills, make sure you continue to write us so we can know how you're doing and what the program is like.

RIP Mama

If I could make one call to heaven, I would call my mama.

If I did I would ask her what happened, what did my dad do? How did he kill her? I would also tell her that I'm sorry because the day before she died we had a big argument. I would ask her where my dad is now. I would tell her I love her and I miss her I want her. I would also tell her I forgive her for using me when she wanted something, and how she neglected me as a child. I love you Mama! October 31, 1960-Oct. 26, 2006. Love always, Your Daughter.

Lastly, I'm gonna reach for the stars 'till I see you again. Say hi to my brother and nephew for me.

-Sunshine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sunshine – you picked the perfect name for yourself, because you write about the darkest storm, and yet your bravery and love are the sun that shines through it. You're off to a placement now, and wherever you are, we hope you are living true to your words. The sun is also a star, so reach for the star you already are.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

One Call

If I had one phone call, I would call myself. Even though I would love to call my grandmother who was my Mom, Dad, teacher, friend, sister and much more to me. But there's a point in my life where I have to meet myself, in other words, confront my past, ask myself why? Why did you do what you did? Do you have an explanation for yourself? Explanation, or not, I'm gone pull my pistol out and shoot myself. Not shoot me, but the old me.

The person I can't listen to because ain't no words coming out your mouth, my mouth. You choke on your own spoken words that can't be heard. Damn, before I know it, I dropped dead to the curb. The new me is free and the call drops. Bee, bee, bee, bee, bee, bee, ring, ring. "If you like to make a call, please hang up and try again."

-Lil' Looney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a different way of sharing your thoughts. Someone once said that, no one can hurt me, as much as I hurt myself. If those are your real thoughts towards the old you, then we hope you never let that old, unpredictable you resurface. Through confronting and understanding your past, you would be in a better position of valuing your future. Of course the hard work part to that falls on you. This time make sure you dial up the right number. Confront the situation, say what you have to say, and move on. We may be able to assist you with the coins needed for that call, but we will definitely provide you with the paper and pencil part, it's just as effective as a call.

Young Innocent Ones!

Well unfortunately the two lil' girls that got shot were one of my potnas daughters and one was a cousin!

My potna's daughter is the one that's hospitalized and the cousin past away. It makes me feel if I wasn't locked up I would be seeking revenge. They know they're wrong and since they want to run and hide instead of doing the right thing why not make them reap what they sow.

If I could say anything to my potna and his baby momma I would just do anything to show I care! But for the shooters I can't say nothing but it's more like how I would I act or respond to what they did. One thing I can say is right now I'm glad I'm locked up because I would probably do something that I would regret some day.

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It took great heart to write this, and to read it out loud. It's like your hate for the evil of it had to fight with your love for your potna and cousin, and in your heart the love beat the hate. There is so much violence and terror in this world – so much loss and grief, it's like people's hearts get ripped out of their chests every day, both physically and emotionally. Our only hope is doing what you did just now, which is fighting that darkness with the strength of your voice, your emotions, and your honesty. We are relieved that you were locked up when this happened again, because revenge is part of the problem — but the fact that you wrote about it, that's part of the solution. Peace, and from the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

Why

Why is life so long, so hard and stressing?
And still, so many people wanna live
even though they say it's not worth it.
Why is death so simple, so peaceful
and yet, no one really wants to die
when their time is up?
Maybe we just don't give ourselves time
to appreciate what we got
and the so many things we take for granted.
Life is just what you want to make out of it.
I say: let's give ourselves time to think about
why we're really here.
And let's expand our dreams
and make them come true.

-Drew, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Hey, not bad at all. Which means: good, very good. What inspired this piece? How do you look at your own life? What will you do to improve your life? Tell us your plan.

Grandma Rose

Dialing
1-800-HEAVEN
Hello. This is God speaking how may I help you, or who would you like to speak to?
I would like to speak to Rose, my grandmother.
OK, Tajanik let me get her for you.
How did you know my name?
I'm God.
Ok.
Hi Tajanik how are you?
I'm fine and you?
I'm fine also.
I'm sorry I ran away grandma for four years.
Tajanik I was worried about you I haven't seen you since you were twelve.
I didn't mean to hurt you and I'm sorry I wasn't here when you died I wish I was. But when I came back I knew you were gone the first thing I said was I know she's gone, my mama said yes she is. Why can't you come back granny?
Because I'm in heaven now, it's time for me to go.

-Tajanik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The way you wrote this piece is really interesting—you tell a whole story using only dialogue. That's not an easy thing to achieve. We're sorry you missed out on your grandma's last years, and we wonder where you were for four years. Were you running from an unsafe situation? Four years is a long time for a twelve year old to disappear for. Now you're back at home and back in juvie—what would grandma say about that? We think she would probably want better things for you.

My Call To Lil' Rudy

I met Rudy Henderson Jr. on Feb. 19, 2006 on our block.

He gave me his number, so I called him when I got in the house my big sister Shonie was telling me too call him so I did. He was cute short, stocky, muscular forget it he reminded me of Winnie the Pooh that's why I really feel in love with him but anyways we ended up going on a double date me, him, my sister, and her boy friend. So then after that night we became like Bonnie and Clyde we were unbreakable and some ninjas didn't like it.

But on March, 23, 2006 we was riding around we went back to the block and then that's when he got shot in the chest two times. I was scared and in shock didn't know what to do I just jumped out the car and ran and called for help. Here's more...

Lil' Rudy why did it have to be you, you were kind hearted and giving.
Sometimes I sit in my room and cry
'Cause they took you right in front of my eyes
I mean why.
On March 23, 2006
12:30 at night was the last time we rode,
We smoked had fun
But at the end I cried
'Cause that was the last time I said I love you and good bye.
When the gun shot
I was in shock
Couldn't move or scream
That's when I knew it was the end of you and me.
At the funeral, I seen your angel, and he said to me
Don't cry lil Shawnee I'm still here for you it'll be alright.

-Lil' Shawnee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You ended this tragic story on a moment of beauty and hope, and that's a sign of a strong heart. We are so sorry Rudy died, and so sorry you had to be with him when it happened. But Rudy was too old for you, and he didn't have his life together. Be careful who you give that heart to next time around, OK? It needs to be someone who values himself enough to value his life, and it needs to be someone your age or close to it – you're too important for anything less.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

What's On My Mind

'Sup Beat? I don't really know what's on my mind right now, so tired and bored. I'm just gonna talk randomly, I guess.

Damn! Last night the staff in here played music all night. I mean to at least 1 a.m. I stayed up to hear all the jams, and now I'm so tired. Just want to lay on my bed and KTHO (knock the hell out).

Man, March 21st will be my fourth month here. It is also my court date. My lawyer said my disposition is going well. So I'm really hoping it will go well. I've been having dreams lately about me in the outs. Dreaming about my past. I'm just hoping March 21st will be the day... I have so much plans when I get out.

But yeah... put this in Standout! It's a request. I don't know why and I know you guys would be like, "What's special about this piece that it should go in Standouts?"

I will be like, "I don't know... Sigh. Too bored. Just read this and forget this. I want to read the pieces, Beat! I hope you guys will bring it tomorrow to U7! Anyways, I'm gonna respond to today's topics quickly:

If I had a phone call to Heaven, I would speak to my grandpa because I pray to him every night. I really want to see him again.

I'm shocked to hear about the "young, innocent bystanders to violence" because I really can't imagine a very young person close to me dying from a shooting. I would be mad as hell if I knew someone who died that is that young as the topic says... three and four-year-old innocent girls!

My home away from home... Hmmm... I can't really say I have another home better than home. But I do have places I like going rather than being at home. I would say going to LA, movie theaters, bars, clubs and places with a scenic view.

That's about it, Beat. See you next week!

-Lil' Jj U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sorry we couldn't agree to give you a standout... This is better than a standout! You probably don't know, but the style of writing you chose, just putting down your random thoughts as they occur, is called "stream of consciousness," and we loved how you went from the staff keeping you up half the night (with its inevitable consequences the next day) to court, to dreams of past and dreams of future, and all under the umbrella of boredom. By then, you had already earned Standout status. But by answering all three topics (even though we prefer only one) in a way that we learn something in every case, you leapfrogged into Olympic Silver! Next time you're bored, why not write a piece explaining what it means in the Chinese culture to pray to your grandfather. Many people may not understand this.

Giving A Little Support

Well, today I got a lot on my mind. I'm too worried about other people's problems than mine. Like this girl, she's barely into her teens and I'm seventeen. She wants to run from her program, and I'm trying to keep her here, 'cause I don't want her to go back to the hall. She wants to be with her mom and I'm trying to explain, that running from your problems is only going to hit you harder sooner or later.

I'm trying to give her support and all my time, because she is like me growing up, so I'm giving back by helping others. So God, please give me strength.

-Nessa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You're doing a great thing, Nessa, but you're right to pray for strength because you'll need it. The problem is, you're telling a child that she's thinking like a child (which is without regards to the consequences). But because she IS a child, she can't really understand the mature message you're trying to teach her. But if you're persistent (and she has a few brushes with reality), she, too, can mature into the kind of young adult that you have become.

Speak Out

Growing up in da 'hood you can choose two lives
Get a decent education or you choose two knives
Success or da block hit da books or a knock
Either headed to da top or ya life to a stop
Or maybe if you lucky you can get a second chance
Time goes by without the slightest peak or glance
See what happens when you born into a struggle
You have no voice like you wear a human muzzle,
Or at least you think so? "but you do"
Don't think slow!
With that voice you can speak out
Stop the violence and stop the streets bouts
Brutality in the streets leap to crime buildings
Lead to gun play which leads to dying children
These type of incidents terrorize communities
But still we shall rise! To make unity
Together is strong and even more powerful
Achieve this and we have reached past our goal

-Freshy U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There's no doubt that you have a voice, and you're using it! This is terrific! Whether y'all will rise or not is not something you can bring about, but whether you rise or not is well within your power. It seems to us that you're on your way up. Just keep moving in that direction!

Innocent And Dead

I find myself getting mad just thinking about a small kid can get killed by chance. They say a four-year-old girl just got shot and killed in a drive-by shooting. She was only four! What did she do to anyone?

I bet the shooters who shot her didn't even know that they shot her. For them, they will go to sleep at night like nothing happened, while the parents of the girl that got shot are at the hospital, talking to the doctor that tells them their daughter is dead. I think that is the worst news for any parent to hear. I don't know how those parents are taking it, but I will pray for them. The sad thing is that things like that happen way too often.

-Lionfishy U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, Lionfishy! It's already tragic that young people who are involved in things they should not be involved in get hurt and killed, but when the victim is an innocent four-year-old, it goes beyond ordinary tragedy. We hope you are doing nothing to contribute to this ongoing violence, and in fact are doing everything you know how to end it. How are you keeping yourself free from the beef and contributing toward your own better future?

One Phone Call To Heaven

Hello Mom
I slipped again
I got back up though
Things are different and in time, different will mean better
Sometimes there's just this conflict of who I am now
And who I want to be
When I'm left with a stalemate, I think of you
I think of how you would want me to be and that's the son that I want to be too!
I love you
As long as you're in my heart, you'll always be my map to the life I want to live
I won't get lost again or side-tracked even
I found myself again through you
Bye mom
Don't be worried
I know I'm not

-Harrison U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If you were able to talk to your mom and tell her everything you've said in this wonderful poem, then she would know she is truly in Paradise. We don't know how you "slipped again," but we know it's much easier to promise that it won't happen again while you're locked up than it is to keep that promise when you are free. So we hope you take this fine poem and tape it to your bedroom mirror so that you can read it every morning. Make you mom proud. Make yourself proud.

My Question

Days go by and I still ain't change
I wonder why my life remain the same
Same thoughts about life, murder, and sex
Same thoughts about getting out, bustin' necks
Same thought being on the block till none is left
But that ain't all, the good thoughts is still there
But in my mind, it's like tug- a-war up there
Don't know what way to go, stuck on the crossroad
Gotta make a decision so I gotta be bold
Night and day I pray for a new life
But when evil lurks in my mind, there no room for nice
If there is a God, why don't You help
'Cause I feel like the devil is me and no one else
I feel abandoned when God don't answer my call
I pray and try not to come back, but I'm back in the hall
Is it me, or is there just too many people in the world
I don't know what it is, but I seem all alone
When I get killed, the world a go on
I see no point in God 'cause when I pray He does nothing for me
Every time I call, He just sit and ignore me
but I'm a Militant-ass ninja so I'ma continue to do what I do best
Stay with my gun and stay my vest
And if You're up there please put me to rest
Not by death, but by life style
And try to get me out of jail 'cause I been down a while
I just wanna better life that's not hard to give
But remember that a grave is not hard to dig

-Too Militant U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very honest "prayer" to a God you're not sure exists. You don't know if you believe in God, and what's more serious, you don't know if God believes in you. But if there is a God, how do you know He is ignoring you? Maybe He is answering you by taking you off the streets and out of the beef, even if only temporarily. Maybe these "time outs" in the hall are His way of giving you time to think about your life, time to write powerful poems like this that are the product of some deep thinking. It seems like you want it both ways — you want to pretend that you're really asking for God's help to guide you out of the lifestyle you've chosen while at the same time announcing that you're not going to change! Maybe God is waiting for you to stop ignoring His prayers to you! It's very obvious, TM, that you have an excellent brain (a gift not everyone is blessed with), so maybe God has already given you the tools you need to live a life that respects ALL of God's creation, from so-called enemies to yourself and your loved ones. And maybe it's time to use those tools for something bigger than yourself.

As A Little Rascal . . . .

...You don't know anything.
You don't know right from wrong. A
ll you know how to do is drink milk from your mom's breasts.
As you keep growing on your path of life,
you plant seeds and learn new things.
The future comes but you don't yet understand the meaning of life.
But with every breath and every kiss your mom gives you, you feel inferior.
All you have is family and the clothes on your back to keep you warm.
Now I'm older, and I understand.
But I'm locked up behind a door and my mother's shedding tears
every time I'm locked in here.
But one day I will see the light and really understand.

-Rascal, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You see the steps, the progressions, from infant to child to young man. It really is time to "catch the drift of things". You deserve better and your mom does too. You have a good brain. Put it to good use for yourself and your family.

When The Innocent Get Touched

It's a trip, Man. I ain't even gonna introduce myself today. I should be well known, que no Beat? But like I was sayin', I don't see a whole lotta cats pick up a gun knowing they don't have aim. They like playing with guns 'cause they can shoot from a mile away, not knowing who's actually getting touched. Why can't people go toe to toe like back in the days?

I'm speaking it real, and I ain't gonna lie. I still see homies goin' at it. I'm glad, 'cause they settle their problems like that instead of shooting the hot lead.

I've been blasted at many times. I've been hit six times, and stabbed three times and that shhh ain't cool. I think that if you really feel like lighting someone up, you better get out the ride and run up on his ass. And let him have it. At least you get the right one, and no innocent people get hurt.

Now, I'm not glorifying drive-bys or violence or anything like that. But you know shhh like that is gonna keep on going. That's real talk.

Well, time to go. Keep trucha.

-Goofy U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First, we decided to keep your more traditional Beat name for the one you put on this piece... Second, we wonder what you think about the strategy of war that includes dropping tons of bombs from airplanes, sparing no one on the ground when they explode? Isn't that the same as the kind of aimless shooting you describe here? We see no possibility that either grown men who go to war or young men who engage in the street war will ever give up those toys that make them feel invincible (despite all the evidence to the contrary). Our only hope lies with individual choices that each of us makes individually. We've truly enjoyed having you in our workshops because you are thinking and challenging us to think. You know where we hope your thinking will take you — away from a lifestyle that forces you to analyze whether it's better to kill from a moving car or kill at point-blank range, and toward a lifestyle that lets you sit at the kitchen table helping your son with his homework.

"The Game"

Dang, just readin' about innocent bystanders just makes me think... "The game" is shady. It'll eat people alive. It involves guns (which hurt people), drugs (which hurt people), turfs (which hurt people), prostitution and much more.

"The Game" is like a negative way of living. It's caused by so many reasons and ruins so many lives. "The Game" itself is like the devil's playground. It has rules and regulations. It's like shootin' dice. You hit, you got just enough to get out, but you can't because seven seems a small odd chance (like getting caught up or killed).

Me? I've been luckily out of the game for seven months now. I got goals and dreams, and it has nottin' to do wit' "The Game," like a retired player.

-Crack Head U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First, we want to give you props for writing a long and detailed piece. And second, we want to give you props for what this piece actually says. We would love to know what some of those "goals and dreams" you have are, and how you plan to achieve them. That would make another fine piece.

My Phone Call To Heaven

If I had one phone call to somebody in heaven I would call my little brother. I would ask him do he miss me? And I would tell him that I really miss him a lot and I wish that he was still down here with me and my family. I would tell him that he was the best brother I ever had and I had a good time with him. I wish he was here so I could take him to Chuckie Cheese one more time. Gone but not forgotten. RIP Davon.

-Marcus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you lost your brother. If he were still around, what kinds of things would you want to teach him. Would you want him to learn from the choices you've made, or would you want him to follow in your footsteps? What kind of example would you want to set for him?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Way That I Feel Inside

The way I feel inside is just so sad.
I love my life and family too
but I just sometimes don't know how to sometimes show it
I try and do good but get treated wrong.
I love my man.
He say he love me too,
but wait, pause, do I believe him?
Is it true?
Hopefully someday someone will come along the line
and love me and care for me
the way I should be treated.
My grandpa died when I was only thirteen years old.
I felt it in my stomach that it was about to happen
I was on my way to school and I took too long to get to him,
now my life is messed up and I'm living so wrong
if you were in my shoes and lived the life I lived
you'll understand what I'm going through.
A life full of stress and depress
it's just miserable if you only knew
then you'll know why a young girl like me would do so wrong,
one day I'll change, as a matter a fact when I get out of jail,
after court, ain't no turning back to doing wrong only right will be my song.

-Chardonnay, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** Your piece says so much, and the main message seems to be that you're searching for love and acceptance and a better way to live your own life. Since we usually can't control other people, sometimes the thing to do is to focus inward. Show yourself the love you seek by taking care of yourself, making good choices and surrounding yourself with positive people. You deserve all of the things you say you want, and you can give those gifts to yourself if you work for it.*

You Way Up There

Bra, how the heck are you?
I'm in here and you way up there.
All these punks act like they don't care.
They don't know about the nights I lay in my bed, can't sleep.
I'm just layin my bed, eyes full of tears and a heart full of pain.
I take deep breaths every time I hear yo 'name and
You was more than family,
You was like my brother,
So when the shhh went down it was like I lost my brother
And I wish we could trade places.
I swear to God dog I wish we could trade places.
Living a life of crime but wasn't your life, it was more like mine,
I often think about the close calls we had
And I often think about the close broads we had
And I love my ninja what you know about that
And I do anything to get Ron B. Back.
RIP Ron B.
I love you bra, you're gone but never forgotten.
We got live nines in this shhh.

-Young A-D, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** This is a heartbreaking poem of grief and regret. We are so sorry, not just for you, but people who loved this young man. His name haunts the pages of The Beat Within like a ghost, just as he haunts your heart. "I wish we could trade places" you say, but actually your task is much harder. You have to live. And also, you have to show the world that his death wasn't in vain – that there is a better, safer way to be. Imagine if you left the streets, if you moved on to get a job, a wife, a house. Imagine him watching you from the skies, ten years from now, while you teach your baby boy how to dribble a basketball, imagine him smiling, laughing at you as you missed a shot, thinking "you missed the basket but you made it in life". You still have a chance. Don't waste that chance.*

How I Feel And See Thangs: To My Fellow Detainees

How I see thangs with my eyes. I came in here to do my time and fight my case and get the hell up out of here, I didn't come in here to have fun, laugh, giggle and meet new people to have new friends. I came in solo and I bet most of you cats did too.

Wherever I'm goin' I'm leavin' solo and y'all too. Straight up, I'm lookin' at time and some of y'all lookin' at time too, so stop playin' with ya self and get ya' shhh together and do your program, you don't have to prove shhh to nobody but yourself, and capable of doin'. So what, the next man talkin' 'bout, he ain't' 'bout what he talkin' 'bout, you got to be about what you talkin' 'bout , straight up, on the real...

Shhh, I don't got to prove shhh to nobody, 'cause the way I see it, we all winnin'.

But while we in here we ain't winnin'. I ain't winnin', you ain't winnin', I mean I mean on some real shhh, now what I'm talkin' about, get ya shhh together and focus on ya' future and dream cause the past is the past what's more important . Your patnas or your family, yeah some females might be writin' us... but who's comin' to our court dates?

When we get released, who we gonna go home to? Who 's payin' for your lawyers? Our family right, so leave them b's alone, 'cause they come and go just' like dollars.

That's how I feel, I don't know about y'all. but every time I hear y'all talkin' about you bustin' this female an' you that female, most of you cats bustin' the same females, come on now, keep it lit dude, be real and we need to think -- 'cause I know y'all smart in the head, but y'all just got to use it. Every chance y'all get a chance to pull ya booboo out an' put it in some female. It's a chance for y'all to get HIV or STD's!

Y'all got to think, step ya game up, 'cause I'm steppin' mine's every day, when I'm wakin' up to the devil, and counselors always tellin' us what to do and quick to put us in our rooms, I mean I don't know about y'all, but I don't like it.

Shhh... if I had a chance to get up out of here I would, but I can't, 'cause I got to deal with my case. But for right now, I'm gonna keep it coo', and wait 'till my time is up, so I can have my freedom.

I and y'all might not be out today, tomorrow, the next day or next week, or next month or next year, but please believe, we all will be out one day.

-J-Money, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** One thing that always tripped us out about the system was how detainees would be at each other's throats, trying to outdo each other, cappin' on each other, etc... especially because when you read these pages, it's so obvious how much everyone on lockdown has in common. Black or white, this gang or that gang, Asian or Mexican, it's almost always people that are suffering through the same things: Remorse over past deeds, loneliness, fear, rage over the indignity of lockdown and the thirst for freedom, and desire to hide the tears for fear of being hated on. And why, with everything they have in common, do people hate on each other while they're in jail? Because the system makes it happen, because the fear runs so high, because of the stress ... it's good that you ask, because it's just like out on the streets: Divide and conquer. If every single underage criminal on the street suddenly turned to every other criminal on the street and said "hey, why we beefin' on each other and why don't we find another way to get our money on"... then it would put the whole system out of business. Hell, it would put The Beat Within out of business too, because you would all be too busy writing for pay, or filling out college applications, or writing up flyers about starting a revolution to get rid of our corrupt leaders. So J-Money, what do you say – are you ready to man up and live these words, and help put us out of business? We'd be honored!*

now my life is messed up
and I'm living so wrong
if you were in my shoes
and lived the life I lived
you'll understand what I'm going through

One Phone Call o The Afterlife

If I had one phone call to the afterlife, I would call my mother. I would tell her that I love her, and that I am sorry for all the pain and hardship I put her through. I'd thank her for being there for me, and for never giving up, and loving me no matter what. I will always love my hefita and I hope that she is happy and never forgets about me.

-Ismael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We are very sorry for your great loss. You will see your mother in your dreams. She will always live there.

They're all I have, the only family and I keep on running from them

A Piece Of Me

Sometimes I feel things will always be the same and never change. I've been on the run for longer than I can remember.

It's taken a toll on my life. It's like I've been running so long, it's hard to stop. When I say it's hard to stop, I mean that I'm used to doing what I want to do when I want to do it. I know now you get nothing out of thinking like that but it's hard to be any other way when you've been through the things I've been through. I want to do so much with my life. I want to be somebody, somebody everybody knows about. I want to go back to school and be at peace with my mother and little brother.

They're all I have, the only family and I keep on running from them. It makes my mom think that I don't love her and don't care about her. When I get out I'm going back to her regardless of what a judge or a p.o say. I've now after all these years have realized that, I should have been with my family being a teenager. Now when I need her the most, I can't be with her. I'm not trying to preach or tell any of the readers my life story, but I've realized that you don't know what you got till you can't have it.

-Malina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You chose this title well, reading these words really does feel like we understand a piece of you – being "used to doing what you want, when you want"... We call that freedom, but really it's more chaos. True freedom seems connected to discipline somehow: It's like a boxer who wants to succeed has to train even if he doesn't want to, a trumpet player who wants to improvise still has to practice scales. It's one of the hardest lessons in life to learn (some of us spend a whole lifetime doing it) – and if you're already starting to understand that now, than you're many steps ahead of the game!

My Phone Call To Grandpa

I would ask to talk to my grandpa because I miss him so much he was so sweet to me.
He passed when I was five.
The pain in my heart don't go away.
I know he protect me but I'm mad he gone
I got so much I wanted ask him
like how was it growing up when he was a kid
why did he choose to have a family in New York. W
hat made him go to school and be successful like he did.
I wish I could see him again.

-Lappa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The sad thing about not having a loved one in your life besides missing that person's presence is not being able to ask such questions.

Face The Music

There's a cement slab
There's a door
A window
You can't see through
And if you look close enough
To the inside you'll see the unwanted you.
Take the time to read this poem
To see what's really going on,
Note that on the inside there's nowhere to run or hide
So make the outside a place where you reside.

-NuNu the System Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell us what inspired this piece? What is really going on with you? What must you face to live in peace?

I Love You And Wish I Was There With You

If I had one phone call to heaven it would be to my little niece because I never got a chance to meet her at all, she passed away when I was incarcerated and my probation officer didn't even let me go to her funeral. That nearly broke my heart, because I didn't get a chance to even look at her little poor face when she was getting buried.

I would say to her that I love her and that I'm really sorry for not being there to see her when she was born -- and that if I had one wish it would be to die and bring her back into this world so that she could see all the good things to enjoy of life. I would ask her how does heaven looks like and if she likes it up there, "I love you and wish I was there with you."

If you could hear me help me to have a better life and do good. Love uncle Boricua Rest In Peace.

-Lil' Boricua

From The Beat: Lockdown is terrible because it keeps people away from the good times, maybe even more terrible because it keeps us away from the bad times too. We're sorry you didn't get a chance to comfort and grieve with your family after your niece, and we hope that talking about it now has helped you work through that grief. In the meantime, you are still here in this world, and like you write, it's important to "see all the good things to enjoy of life." Doing that for yourself is the best way you could ever show respect to the memory of your niece.

One Phone Call

If I had one phone call I would use it to talk to one of my family members. It would be my great grandfather.

And if I could, I would try to do a three way and talk with two other family members. One would be my cousin, who died in a car accident. I'd save the other one for someone else who's special and who I care about. A friend, or maybe another family member. But hopefully, I won't lose someone I care about. Or maybe I'd save that one for me, 'cause just maybe I might go down before anyone else.

-Gonzalez, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: What a very unusual response. The thought that you might talk with yourself on the phone is one of the most original ideas we've read in a long time.

Accidental Homicide

People all around come to my hood to play,
but they get another thing that's violence they prey,
violent people is predator seeking for some blood
They prey is the weak trying to get up out the 'hood
To be a bystander in the heat
of fire is uncalled for sitting at the feet
of father seeing life go past
without a moment or flash
kinda make you think you ain't got a moment to pass.
Innocently speaking
wrong deaths really weakening
That's why I watch where I move in killa season;
this is the season crossfire's written on my head
Hope don't be my life I dread!

-Quad U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's good to watch where you move in all seasons. What are you doing to keep yourself out of the HP violence you describe? Do you want to move out? Where would you go? What do you hope to be doing in five years?

Safe Haven

My safe haven is a tree house,
It was my mansion, my sanction
My garden it made me the smartest,
made me realest, made me illest
made me not think about killing,
made me search for a better time
me rewind time, had write rhymes,
just too search for my inner feeling
that made it so appealing
that made my rage 'cause me to start stealing,
in the end before I started the dealing
I wonder about my safe haven
where I go to start my spiritual healing.

-Quad U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Did you have a tree house for real? If it wasn't a real tree house, was it somewhere that you could find peace and quiet? Why did you give that sanctuary up to come to a place like this?

A Baby Havin' A Baby

How you gon' have a baby
When you still a baby at mind?
You say you gon' get yo' shhh together
But you ain't got enough time
You had a secret in the closet
You thought wouldn't come to light
Now, since I'm leavin'
You wanna put up a fight
Or maybe you don't care
'Cause if you did, it wouldn'ta went in raw
Then I or you wouldn'ta saw the problem we saw
But you made the choice to cheat
After a relationship so long
Doesn't really hurt no more
'Cause now I'm more strong
I hope it makes you happy
'Cause you did somethin'
You said you wouldn't do
I'll be happy again, too soon
As I get over you

-Kel U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're glad that you're over this cheater. Our experience is that most boys will lie for what they want, thinking they'll never be caught, and when they are, they don't want to face the consequences of their act, promising again not to do what they promised they wouldn't do in the first place. You're wise to move on, and let him deal with the consequences.

Young, Innocent By-standers

It's really nothing that we could do about the drive by's bein' stopped. But when I think about it, feel me, it's sad, 'cause people that's innocent at the wrong place at the wrong time have lost their lives for nothing. The most I'll be able to see is at least they're able to RIP now and ain't got no worries or concerns about nothing no more.

No words can take the pain away from a mother that has lost a child or a friend that has lost a best friend. Feel me?

-SeySey U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, SeySey. All you can do is not be a part of the drama that leads to the killing of innocents. We also agree that those who lose their lives are no longer in pain, but that those who are left behind are in pain forever.

I Miss My Brother

If I had one call to Heaven, I would call my brother, my best friend, my whole world, up until the day he died. It's not like he didn't say bye or nothing like that. He actually took time out to say good-bye to me, told me he loved me.

See, when he was telling me, I just thought, "Oh, great, he's going to go one of his three-to-seven-day parties, and I said, "I love you too. Please be careful." He cried a little, kissed my forehead, and left.

The next day, at about 4:00 p.m., he was dead. I would ask him, "Why?" Why didn't he tell me? Why he left me in this crazy world? Why? Why? Why? Because that's the only question that comes to mind.

-Stephanie, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We don't know why your brother didn't have the courage to talk to you about what he was going through. But we know you are the strong one in the family, and maybe that's why you're still standing to ask "Why." Don't let this terrible personal loss keep you from moving forward with your life.

Someone To Call

If I had someone to speak to in Heaven, I would ask to speak to my uncle Dee Lou because I'm so lonely without him. I would ask him to help me survive in these harsh streets because I'm so mad, and I don't care about nothing, feel me, but family and loved ones.

My uncle was really there for me in every need. I miss him a lot. He was all out real with it, and nowadays it ain't no real ninjas on the street that's gone put us younsta up on our feet and lace us up on everything, and a prime example was ma Unc. Dee Lou. Rest In Peace Unc. I love you.

-Yun J Pitt U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very nice tribute to your uncle, YJP. Why are you so mad? Who are you mad at? If you care about your family as much as you say, then why are you hurting them by allowing yourself to be taken away from them and put in a box? When you get out, what do you think is the most important thing you can do to show your love? We know what they want most from you. Can you deliver?

I Love You Dad

If I had one phone cal to Haven, I would call my dad. I would wanna ask him why he was not there all the time when I was younger. Why did you not take a part in my life? I just wanna know. Did you not love me or something? Was I not good enough for you?

I always thought you were the best dad in the world. I just wanted to get to know you more. You were the only father I had. I just want you to know I love you and always will. Please, just one day accept me. I love you dad.

-Mal U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a sad piece, Mal. When did your father pass? How old were you when he left you behind? Will the relationship he had (or didn't have) with you affect the relationship you want to have with your own children? In what ways?

One Phone Call To Heaven

What it do Beat? Me, shhhh! Yeah, if I could get a phone call to Heaven, I would want to talk to my uncle Darren that I never met. My grandmother told me I got some of his ways. Like, I would let him know dat the family miss him and nobody forgot about him, and let him know dat shhh I am doing really is not coo', so for him to guide me. Even knowing he is up there to just give me some type of signal or sign to let me know that I am messing up.

I would ask him to try to find my grandpa because I really miss him and wish I was able to see how he is doing. Just to hear his voice again. And that is what I would do if I had a phone call to Heaven.

Young Majic U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you really need your uncle to tell you when you're messing up? You already know when that happens. What kind of advice do you think your Uncle Darren would give you? What changes would he ask you to think about? What would you be willing to do, if he asked you to?

To My Unborn Baby

If I could talk ta someone in Heaven, I would talk to my unborn. I'd ask, "How are you doing? How you like it up dere? Is God and Heaven everything people say it is? I'm sorry me an' Mom wasn't able to give you dem birthdays or dat first time to ride a bike or dat first kiss or first time you go to school. I'm sorry you weren't able to come into da world, sorry Mom wasn't able to carry you and lost you. I just want you to know dat I love you an' always will. Even though I was never able to touch, smell, or hold you, I do love you with all my heart, and you'll always be dere."

-P-Smokes U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a beautiful letter to a child you never knew. We can see how great an impact the loss of this baby had on you, and we appreciate your feelings. We hope you find a way out of the situation you're in now and never again have to give up your freedom to a system that does not have the love for you or yours that you have. When you're back in the world and have finished school, you'll be ready to begin a new family. When you're ready, you will have a healthy child with a father who will be there for him or her. Thank you for this heartfelt piece of writing.

Speaking To Mom In Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would speak to my mom. I would ask her a lot of questions, like how does it feel to be in Heaven, and is it painful to die, and how she was doing all these years. She was gone since 1994.

She would also tell me I could make smart choices than what I have made in my life. She would also tell me that I should think before I do things, because I usually don't. I would tell her to keep watching over me until I die and show me the right path in life, to watch over my family and friends especially my lil' bra and sisters.

She would tell me don't take advantage of life because you only live once. Then I would tell her I love her and I will see her when I get there, and to keep looking down over me and ma family. Then I would tell her I love her once before I hang up.

-Tazz U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It seems like you already know the advice your mother would give, which means you already know how to live your life in a way that would make her proud and would keep you free. What's preventing you from following the advice you know she would give? We know she is watching over you and your family, but she must also be looking to you to help look after your little brother and sisters, which you can't do from inside these four walls. When you get out, try to think about what kind of role model your mother wants you to be for them, and don't do anything you wouldn't want them to do, too.

All of Us So Sad

I'm at Camp Sweeney, done with about two months, and I got about four more months to go. My idea at camp is that it is easy. It is an easy program and for you people ready to come to camp, you don't have to run when you get here. Just do these easy ass five months and you don't have to turn it into a nine month program.

The way me being incarcerated affects me and my family is that it makes all of us so sad that we can't be with each other whenever we want. But the advantage of being in here is that I am staying away from the drug life and violent life out on the streets.

And I also get to enjoy my family a lot more on the weekends when I get to them. But it makes me so sad to know that I got to leave them at 7:30 p.m. and I just only hope that I don't go to the Hall and don't lose hours, just so I can enjoy them a whole lot more. My brother and sister really love it when I'm home and the rest of my family also misses me. I miss them too and I will see them next week.

-Theory1@, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say that the good thing about being homesick is that it makes you realize you do have a home to be sick for. Do you feel like all this time in camp has made you and your family appreciate each other more? Do you talk more, do you understand them better? Do you think when you get out, the family will be closer emotionally from this time apart physically? As for the streets, they'll be waiting for you when you finish up at camp, with all the same temptations and dangers, only this time around, you'll be ready. What kind of plans are you making to help yourself get ready?

Back in Time

Doin' time in here makes me feel alone and all by myself. I have no loved ones here and can't trust anybody – even the staff. Thinking of my parents, brothers, Aunt, and baby's mom, makes me sicker at times, because I know they miss me and can't understand why I continue to do wrong.

To tell the truth I don't understand why I continue to do wrong – knowing where I'll end up (here). If only change was easy for me. Maybe then I would be at peace, not worrying about the police, court dates, probation officers, and everything else that has to do with this system.

I wish I could go back in time and start over but I know things don't work like that so I guess when I get out I got to change, not just for me but for my family.

-Diddy Bop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't start over in the past, but you can start over in the future. All these people have your back: Mom, Dad, Aunt, loved ones. They support you, they will help you. Change is hard, yes (otherwise, given how awful lockdown really is, everyone would be doing it, right), but what's the hardest part? What are the things you'd need to do to make that change easier. Break it down, take the big boulder and chip it down bit by bit til it's just small stones you can pick up and deal with easily. You CAN do it.

A Call To Heaven

I would call my dad in heaven. I miss him so much! He passed away when I was three years old.

I want to tell him that I love him very much and that he's going to see me succeed. I want to tell him that I am going to do what he would want me to do if he were still alive.

Also, I would have him on a three-way hook up along with God. And I would tell God that I thank him very much for what he has done for me and what he is still doing for me. I would ask God to keep me safe and to bring me a step closer to him everyday and a step further away from violence everyday. I'm done! RIP Dad — I love you!

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You show a deep understanding of the topic and, as far as we're concerned, not only did you just make that three-way connection — but in writing this piece, you've allowed your love for your father and for a loving God to shower blessings on us all, or all of us with the wisdom to repeat the everyday prayer with which you end your piece (whether on our knees out loud, or silently in our everyday lives, as we seek to bring heavenly peace first to our own hearts and then to share it, not through preaching but through acts of love and the generous gifts of a heavenly spirit).

Trust

Being lied to is so painful that it makes you feel like don't nobody care about you. When your mom or dad tells you that they will come see you and they lie, how do that make you feel?

I know it makes me feel like I'm not being loved the way I should be. When your moms and dad tells you something, they should do it like they said they was gon' do.

Don't get me wrong, some of our moms and dads be real, and some them is fake as hell too. My mom and dad always lie to me. Well not always but most of the time they do, and that's so painful. When they lie to me and when I'm in here and they life it's even more painful. I don't know about y'all but it hurts me a lot to be lied to. And that's the truth. No more to be said.

I have time to do here, I hope they don't send me to go see CYA. I just want one last chance from the judge. I hope he gives it to me too. What my bra always told me was do the time, don't let the time do you. But it's hard to do this when you know they are tryin' to put you away for a long time. But he always told me to fight for what's yours. We ask for help but it's like don't nobody help us. I know they tryin' to give me some real time, and I'm tryin' my hardest to fight this out, but it looks like I'm not going to win this one. But the judge gave me a lot of chances and I messed them all up. I'm sorry. My mom says, never say sorry, but I had to say it this time. I have hard time to do here.

Staff be hatin' on you because they don't like you, or they don't get what they want at home. Yeah, we be goin' dumb on some of these staff and kickin' our door, stuff like that, because they do what they do to us.

What my mom always told me was respect people as we want to be respected but no that don't work sometimes, but most of the time it do. Why some of these staff be hatin' on us, like that, but I think it's because we be goin' dumb so hard that they have to hate to make us learn from our mistakes and what we do.

-Lil' Alex The Boo Boo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We combined together three pieces because they were all connected to each other. In a way, every piece you write is about similar themes – it's the work of a young man struggling to find the right way amidst a great deal of pain, looking for wisdom and looking for his own strenght. You have suffered a lot – at home, in here, wondering about your future, and maybe you've made others suffer too, but each week you put it down with hope. You try to understand your parents, you teach us about your mistakes, you work through whatever incidents have happened over the week. We don't know what the system has in store for you, but believe us when we say from deep in our hearts that you are person with the strength to handle it. You haven't once written about giving up, you haven't once let yourself start hating on people, you always bring your heart to the table, and to the page. That is a courage that can't be taught, and a strength that can't be faked – and it inspires us each week. Keep it up, it'll carry you through.

Tired

Damn, life is hectic.
Every day I wake up feelin' neglected.
Everybody wanna be respected
So they carry a gun to feel protected
When we need to get our minds protected
'cause they makin' new jails every time a president is elected.
The murder rate is getting higher
The streets hotter than fire
They playin' hard ball like (Mark) McGwire
Life got me tired.
George Bush needs to get fire(d)
The system's a liar
So why not retire?

-Fat Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need a new nickname, 'cause with the widom you drop each week, "Fat" just doesn't do you justice. How about Wayne the Educator, Wayne the Brain, Poetic Wayne, Truthspeakin' Wayne. OK, those names might not work, but the point is, you need a name that reflects the talent and thought you bring to The Beat's pages each week!

Ride or Die Chick

She's a ride or die chick
Slim waist and super thick
I like the smell of her perfume,
Or style I should assume
No lies she so beautiful
And her face is so adorable
Her personality is so tight
The romance is so nice
She's like a pair of Nike's
Also like a true wifey
It's just like I'm in this world,
So lost and cold without this girl
I don't know what to do but just keep it so "fo' real"
I don't know what to tell you,
But keep the game koo'
Keep my words tight and have it sound true
I'm lost in this fantasy,
Scared of the cold mind,
'Cause I wouldn't know what it would do to me
So in love with the girl that looks so sexy
She's a ride or die chick, slim waist and super thick
Damn girl, we could do a porno flick!

-T Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, it takes a true poet to get away with comparing a girl to a pair of sneakers, but you managed to pull it off. You might have invented a new form – it's half a love poem, half a lust poem, it's like a lovust poem! For act 2, will you tell us what you think it means to be a Ride or Die chick (we know what they say in the songs, but your version will be more interesting!)

Going Home

I wanna go home so badly. I hate being here in "jail" eating nasty-ass food, wearing other people's clothes. I wanna go home because I want to be with my family, and 'specially my mom. And when I go home I want to eat better food, and wear my own clothes, spend time with my family because I never spend time with them.

I hate being in a room and using the bathroom with other people. Each time I go to court, I never get out. I been here for two months. It seems like I've been here for two years. I go to court tomorrow. I hope I go home. That's all I want to do. I'm never coming back!

-William U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Of course you want to go home. This place is designed to make you NOT want to come back. We hope you take your promise not to come back very, very seriously (because we've heard that promise made many times by many young people who, for whatever reasons, are not able to keep it). Just remember this, two months is not two years. It's a long time for someone your age to be locked up, but it is a short time compared to what the system has waiting for those who don't make some necessary changes in their lives. Let that be a word to the wise.

Hit And Couldn't Run

One time, a long time ago, I was on the run and I got runned over by a car. The car runned over me, probably on purpose, and I didn't have a weapon. My leg was all fat and swollen. I got hit with the car and something sharp in my pocket stabbed me in the side. I didn't go home, I didn't go to the hospital, I just went back to the block with my leg all messed up.

A lot of kids don't go to the hospital when they're messed up, because they're on the run and they don't want to get caught up by the police.

-Lil' R LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Amazing. Did your leg heal up on it's own? Can you see any scars left over from the car running over you? It must have hurt like hell. How did you deal with the pain? How did you clean and bandage your wound?

Through This Storm

it seem' like my brain gone
everyday i get rained on
like windshield wipers in a cold storm
and i find myself crumbling like paper
not knowing my next move
or who's who
it's so easy to make the wrong move
and that move could cost me my life
so i got to be cautious and think twice
like somebody that's thinking
about committing
suicide
even though i'm
close to that point
but i got too many people that love me
to go out like a joint
so i got to stay strong
'cause only the strong survive
so i'm gon' keep pushin'
like crack in my community
but somewhere in my life
i plan to find unity

-Jesus Coleon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep pushing but not like crack, rather against life's adversity pushing on you — keep pushing back! Fight hate with love, war with peace, a cold world with a warm heart, despair with hope, curses with prayers, grudges with forgiveness, shame with pride, past guilt with present innocence, thoughts of suicide with all your living heart and soul and mind, for you will survive to succeed and thrive — this pain too shall pass, and you will feel happy, joyous, free in your life, at last!

Regret

Keep doing what I do,
I find myself in a ditch.
Electric chairs ropes around my body clinched.
I want to live life full of respect
things I done I will always regret.

-Lil' Damani, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The ditch you might find yourself in is one that we know you have the power to get out of, if you put your mind to it. You're an extremely intelligent person, and still young enough to redirect your destiny. Solid piece.

My Baby

What's up, Beat? It's J-Stub an' I got ten weeks go to, an' I will be back home with my baby and we can do all the things we want to do together, 'cause this place got us both stressing, 'cause we not together right now on this hot day, but it's good, 'cause we gone have days better than this in our lives. But I really love her an' I will do anything to make her happy, 'cause she my baby.

-J-Stubs LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like whatever you got into that brought you down to the Ranch isn't going to influence you again, so you can be sure you're free to be with your lady. Tell us what it is you will be doing to remain free?

Home One And Two

My home away from home is patna's house. I'm always there when I'm not at my house. It's like my second house, I shower there, eat there, change there, do what I do there. The good part about my friend's house is that he live right behind my house. That's what I'd like to call my home away from home.

-Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Does your friend's house feel like a safe place for you? Is it safer than your own home or is it just that you can do as you please there?

My Thoughts

My thoughts is that it's ridiculous that people can't go outside without something happen or someone getting shot. Where I was raised out there was shooting all day every day.

-Thomas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree with you, and we think that, more than being ridiculous, it's just so sad. If we can do the best we can as individuals to work toward change, maybe future generations will enjoy a more peaceful world. That means starting with yourself and your own life. What can you do?

I Was Six . . .

...When I first seen something violent... was when my older brother slapped a dude with a gun because he disrespected my granny and called her a bitch. So he knocked him out, then shot the gun by his head.

Then I seen a man get shot to death in front of my house. And the police didn't know shhh.

Then I got older and my older brother got life for murder 'cause his friend told on him, so he's been in jail for eleven years and got fourteen years to go.

Now I got eight months and a placement, but I seen a lot of shhh that happens for years, two, but I hope it stops down, 'cause it is tearin' up the town.

We need to Stop the Violence. I think it's horrible that I seen all this violence in my sixteen years, than a few of my friend in my lifetime. That don't make me strong, it makes me think more about the world and my friends in it, so that's what it is.

-Rece, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right – you said in this piece right here: We need to Stop The Violence. The good news is that there is a ray of hope. So far in 2007, the homicide rate is down by a third from where it was last year at the same time... but there is so much more to be done. By the Mayor, the community elders, but also young people like you, who have suffered first-hand from all the bloodshed on the streets. Have you asked yourself what you can personally do to end the violence – even more importantly, to make sure you don't add to it or become a victim of it?

Success

As far as I know, what expectations a human needs to survive, to adapt and to live is things that build resiliency, caring and support, high expectations for success, opportunities for meaningful participation, positive bonds, clear and consistent boundaries and good life skills. Those words are probably the most biggest and thickest words I heard. What's even worse is that I cannot be any of those things. I'm still trying but I'm writing this for everyone.

So far, I been here for three months and heard a lot of words and advice, but it has to be more than that. So far, accomplishing these things is a struggle. I'm out

-Alex U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Of course it's a struggle, Alex. These are qualities we all struggle to achieve, though for some the struggle is more difficult. You say you "cannot be" any of those things, but we disagree. You may not have these qualities in your life yet, but they are not the kind of things one just wishes for and they magically occur. They require that struggle you're talking about, and you shouldn't judge this one moment in your life to conclude that you cannot be "any of those things." You can and you will, if those are things you want in your life. Yes, it must be more than just words, but what would help you the most on the outs to make these words a reality?

If I Had One Call To Heaven

If I had one call to heaven I would call my grandparents. I miss them a lot, I would stay or talk for hours on end even if I had nothing to say. I know they would be disappointed in me for being here alone, being here again.

-Spiderman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you ever think of using the love and respect you feel for your grandparents to turn your life around in their memory? That would be the biggest gift you could give to yourself and to them.

Ron-Ron Calls From Heaven

ron-ron what's good, this ya man sincere-fly-baby
fresh out the army, now the captain of my own navy
ron-ron forgive me if i gotta send word to ya lord
and weezy forgive 'em 'cause they don't know what they playin' for
i'm like a young god in the street just tryin'a stay cool in the heat
i would always get my money even when it takes bangin' hard
i would always get that young moola longa than a hundred yards
now i'm locked up, can't no one send me to the graveyard
i'm a fly guy out there got my money stackin' dumb-ax high
ninja since i'm in here i'm so good i can look in jesus' eye
the world betta grab they' gucci sunshade 'cause i burn bright
if i ain't spit it right, i'll let ya life have a good night

-Sincere, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do flow, but sometimes go so fast, you go right past where you started out to go. Ron-ron and Weezy both disappear before you hit the last line here. Oh well, we just want to tell you we changed this and that, cut a little back and tied a little down — like we took you out the town before you look Jesus in the eye, 'cause he always was willing to visit the prisoner locked inside. And your dream of being a god-like gangster in the streets, is just a contradiction in terms as we see it. What you're calling bright is dark, and what you mean by shine is what has you locked up doing time. So quit claiming to be divine, and try to find a way to free your mind from mistakes of the past. The life you're trying to floss on this page did not outlast your teen years, 'cause you're locked up in here. Use this time to let your mind clear and come back with a rap that brings the truth near.

If I Had One Phone Call To Heaven Who Would I Speak To

If I had one phone call to heaven I would ask to speak to my grandpa and I would say to my grandpa, "Hi how are you up there?"

Me, I'm a little stressed and depressed out I miss you and wish you were here with me because my life ain't the same since you passed away.

Then I would ask him to let me speak to God and I would say to Him can you please take away all my bad dreams, ways, and sins and please bless me.

-Chardonnay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It would be just so nice if we could talk to those that we have lost. Some folks do talk to them in their prayers or just in their minds and hearts, and that too can be helpful. As far as asking god to forgive you for your sins and take away your bad ways and dreams, we want to tell you that the most important thing is that you forgive yourself for your past actions. By forgiving yourself you can give yourself permission to move forward and take control of your future. That means changing your own ways. We think if you start down that path even your dreams will transform into good ones.

I say, if I had a phone call to heaven, I would call my uncle Karl and ask him why? Why did you have to go without saying good bye, or say keep the family up?

Talking To My Grandma In Heaven For Just A Minute Is A Tease

What it do, Beat? This Young Jeff.

If I had one phone call to heaven, to be real wit' you, I would talk to my grandma and ask her what she been up to and have she been thinking about us and do she miss us and a bunch of questions, and tell her how my life been without her.

But then, again, I'm not saying like I wouldn't wanna talk, it's just that it's a tease. I would wanna hug and share a good moment with laughing, enjoying ourselves.

I would talk to the homies an' see what's up wit' them, feel me? Because they just like me. So that's who I'll talk to. Holla back, Beat.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Very interesting and thoughtful piece. What has your life been like since your grandma died? How was your life with your grandma while she was here on earth? Did you stay with her while you were growing up? She must have been very affectionate and loved you very much. You're right, it would be a tease to just talk to someone you love and miss and not be able to hug and kiss them, and hang with them. What would you ask your grams about being in heaven?

RIP Goofy

Riding in the big boat
Where you never let me smoke a 'port
Slappin' the Zapco hella hard
Riding on the boulevard
Smoking on purple straight from the town
Going so stupid wit' the top down
I still can't believe you're gone
I remember when you was hella on
Chilling at the weak telly,
Scarface you ain't even gotta tell me
I wish you would of got caught that day
When me and my cousin was off hella yay
Tweakin' in the back thinkin' you was going down
We wish you went down instead of to the ground
'Cause I couldn't take it, none of us could
It was so many tears running through the hood
I still got the clothes you gave me
When I ran from camp that was crazy
I miss you Goofy, I'll be where you are
'Till then I'm a keep yo' name tatted on my arm
It's messed up moms went too
Then a week later, there goes you
When I think about it I cry
And now I think about it, I wanna die
Dayme
Rest In Peace Charmaine
Tommy aka Goof
And all the fallen soldiers who lost their life
One love
Stay with the man up above.

-Angelo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thinking of the good times does help, somewhat, deal with the pain and grief of losing a loved one, or close friend. You mentioned how you wished he would have down instead of to the ground. Looking at your life, do you feel like your fortunate to be in there and not out on the streets, where who knows what could happen to you? Eventually we all pass and hope to end up in the same place. Is it smart then to rush the inevitable? Aren't there other ways you could have fun and enjoy life, without having to put your life in jeopardy? It sounds like your friend impacted you and the hood through his passing. Can his life now impact yours in a more positive and constructive way?

Phone Call To My Uncle

What's up Beat? This ya boy Lil' B Kid. I say, if I had a phone call to heaven, I would call my uncle Karl and ask him why? Why did you have to go without saying good bye, or say keep the family up? Why did you have to get shot by the police? He the one who had given me my name. Why he called me that I don't' know, but I guess he was trying to tell me something.

When I got home that day of the funeral, there was a letter on my dresser and it said, "Sorry Little B Kid," with a picture of me. But I will never forget him, that's why I got that name.

-Lil' B-Kid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see why you'll never forget him. It's sad how that situation played out and the emotions, questions it's left you with. Is there another way you can live up to that name that would make your uncle proud? Have you ever heard of reverse psychology? What did he know and remember you by, playing ball, doing good in school, acting like you don't care? Is there a way for you to now live that would make him proud and not sad? And we mean proud in a good way. Have you ever talked with someone constructively about this and the impact it's left you with? You might want to give it a try because it may be helpful to hear some constructive feedback.

If I Had One Phone Call To Make, I'd Call My Dad

If I had one phone call to make, I would like to speak to my dad. I would like to tell my dad that I appreciate what he did for me in court today. I got arrested on a Monday in my fourth period class for sneaking out my house, supposedly at two in the morning.

I had court today and at least eleven of my relatives came to support me. When the judge told me to come back on April ninth,I was really pissed, because I was being held accountable for something I didn't do.

As my court was ending, my dad made a last plea to the judge. That was the first time in my life I have ever seen my dad stand up for me and cry. That showed me I have a dad that loves me and cares about me. No matter how much trouble I go through, or no matter how many times we fight. And I'm getting released tomorrow.

-Run, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That must have made you a little emotional. Now that you know your dad is willing to stand up for you, regardless of what's happened, what are going to do about it? There's a way of paying back your father for his actions, and we're not talking about through words. It sounds like your father speaking on your behalf was enough to get you released. Is knowing that enough to make you get your act together? Not just for him, but especially for yourself! Time will tell and we rather hear from you free, than incarcerated. Please keep all of what happened in mind.

Suddenly

Suddenly I'll wake up dead.
Suddenly all of my dreams will come true
Suddenly all unrealistic promises will come through
Suddenly out of the blue you'll notice me acting brand new.
Suddenly the world will be over.
Damn now it's just me and you.
Now we can rekindle a love that was true
Being back old memories of being a troublesome two
Something like Bonnie and Clyde, I know you remember.
Suddenly it all comes back.
Suddenly your mind is unblack.
Suddenly you realize that we go back like four flats on a burnt orange Cadillac.
Damn….it just hit me… all of a sudden.

-Nunu The System Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love the poem, your rhymes on this crackle like wood in a fire, Bonnie and Clyde started out robbing and killing and then died themselves. It's romantic in the movies but in real life it's a waste. Can you give us a love story that doesn't start in robbery and end in death? You deserve one!

The Library, My Home Away From Home

I call my home away from home "The Library." The library is my home away from home because they hang there. Everything I need, I can just chill there anytime I want and plus it's quiet. They got books that I can find anything in, I can draw if I wanna draw, and internet access if I want to look something up.

One really good thing about my home away from home is that when I'm arguing with my mom, or her boyfriend, I can always turn to the library if I want to clear my head, and come back when I'm more calm. Great way of staying out of jail.

So that's why the library is my "Home away from home."

-Andre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's very interesting, but we can see why you consider it that. What are some of the books that interest you most when there? Or is it dependant on your mood for that day? One question, if it's a great way of staying out of jail, then what happened this time? Is there a lesson in this some where? Next time, will you take advantage of the library and not put yourself in the position you're in now?

My Cousin's House Is My Home Away From Home

My home away from home is at my cousin's house. I know that if I get kicked out my house, or just need a place to go, that I can go to my cousin's house. I feel like that's my home away from home, because I got my own room there and whenever I feel like eating, or getting something to drink, I feel comfortable enough to help myself and get what I want to get. I also have someone to talk to if I need to get something off my chest, and I know they'll listen to what I have to say.

-Alfredo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like you're very lucky to have all of what you've mentioned. How does it make you feel to know that you have this other option? Because not all people are as fortunate, but we're sure you know this already. With that said, do you take advantage of that in a positive, or negative way? Are you able to also let others get something off their chest with you? Are you also as supportive as the support you have? If not, can you be?

Our Night Hike

When I first got to LCRS on my second Vision Youth's trip, we went on a night hike. The first thing we did was travel up a very big mountain. When we got to the top, I noticed how much more clear the sky was, compared to being in the city or anywhere else I've been. That night I seen my first shooting star. We hiked all around the mountain. It was September sixteenth. It was, like, ten of us. Everybody had fun.

-Frank LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sounds terrific! Have you ever been camping on the outs? It's so fun! Sometimes BJ, the Ranch counselor, takes a few guys to Big Sur in the spring. If you're still down at the Ranch, why don't you let him know you want to go with his group? You'll sleep in sleeping bags in tents, fry up pancakes and sausages in the morning, hike around the woods, go fishing, etc. Ask BJ—he'll tell you more.

Home Away From Home

Home away from home.
I sit here looking at the walls
telling myself I'm not coming back.
I think about going home,
but it seems like I ain't going.
I got faith, I believe,
I can't wait 'till that day,
but while I'm here I'm home away from home.
It seems like I get used to waking up and being here and now I'm away from home.
But for now I'm home away from home.

-Aladen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What does allowing yourself to get comfortable and accepting where you're at mean to you? Acceptance to some degree can be good. It's good to have faith and believe, but you know there's action that you will need to take to make that a reality. Don't get too used to that place, because you may not mind coming back. We understand where you're coming from and hope you hear where we're coming from.

Looking

I was looking for love, and where I was looking it was impossible to find. I don't know what I was doing wrong. All I know is that the person I loved was not ready. Or I was not expecting that from her.

What she did was very, very wrong, and now I have to live with it for the rest of my life. Don't know if I will ever trust again. All I feel is pain, anger, frustration, and disappointment – in her and in myself – for loving someone who did not deserve to be loved.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: There's nothing we can say that will be half as helpful as the passage of time. Sometimes time is the only thing that will heal a broken heart.

Should I

Hey Beat, what's up? This is Jordan.

Well, as I sit in my cell, I think – should I stop kicking it with the homies, or not.

Well, the homies don't have anything to do with why I'm in here. You are your own person. You know what's right and wrong. So no one should say anything like that. But since I am having a kid coming in to my life, I might just slow down a little bit. But only time will tell, so we will see what happens. Later.

Keep your heads up.

-Jordan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Things don't "just happen" Jordan. Almost every action has a cause and an effect, sometimes lots of causes and lots of effects. Time isn't out to get us. It's what we do with the time we have that determines the quality of our lives. There is an element of chance in our lives, but most of what happens in our lives can be traced to causes. And the choices we make are part of those causes. You're going to be a father. It's time to start preparing for that. Think about the life you'd like for your child. Would it be like your life, or are there things you'd like to be different for your child? Start thinking about how you can help your child have the life s/he deserves.

Last Time I Felt Good

The last time I felt good was when I was out, which was like two months ago. When I was on the outs everyone would tell me I was doing good, like my PO and my teachers and my parents.

But one night I decided to go out with my friends. We got drunk and we got into some crap. And now I'm in here, being tried as an adult. I'm going to be in here for a long time. That was the last time I felt good, and those were good old times.

When I get out I'm going to make something good out of my life. I want to make my parents proud of me and not embarrassed. Alrato. 'Til the next time.

-Chikito, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You don't have to wait until you get out to make your parents proud. You can start hitting the books and building up a first rate vocabulary. (Hey, did you know that the larger your vocabulary, the larger your income is likely to be?) So, start now. Here's a word to look up: Lilliputian. Here's another: loquacious. Lay those words on us the next time we see you.

I'm Callling Heaven

All my fallen soldiers. May your souls rest in peace.
Meezy F. Baby when I call you cousin, put me on speaker.
Damn you been gone for a minute now
When I went back home it was like damn you ain't here no more
I love you. I miss you. And I wish you were still here.
Heaven must have a ghetto 'cause you up there
I can't wait till it's my time so I can see you again.
It feels like yesterday is still here and tomorrow is far away.
Every time I gotta think about you cousin I miss you more and more every day. In loving memory of Armon Dante "Lil Meez?

-NuNu The System Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Put me on speaker." That's the best metaphor for writing and poetry we've heard in a while, and of course it came from one of our best poets. This poem, loud and strong and true – we'd bet it's being heard by your loved ones too.

One Call

Wondering what to do,
what to say,
how to respond to you,
my love.
My heart is for you, and for you only
to treasure in a locked place forever.
Once or twice a year,
pull it out and remember me as the one who really loved you,
and will always love you.
With this heart that God gave me, I turn it to you.
So please take good care of it and please don't break it.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautifully written Uriel. Very beautiful.

The Last Time I Felt Good Was With Mom

The Last time I felt good was when I hugged my mom. That was the best feeling in the world. I had never really hugged her. And it felt good when she hugged me back with all her strength. Then she told me: I love you, mijo. She had a big smile on her face.

-George, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Now you know. It's simple, it's free, and it makes everyone feel good. What more could you ask for?

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

Que Onda Beat? Damn, you're taking me back to the good old days with this topic.

Well, I've been down for well over a year and I tend to always think about times I really felt good. But I have a couple of times. So here's one. It was when I was chillin' with a lot of my homies at this canton. There were OGs, 'lil Gs, skinny Gs, and Big Gs. It was a firme party and I had a really good time.

Another time was with my familia. We threw a party and a lot of hente showed up and partied all night.

But the good thing about both of these parties was that there was no tension in the air.

Well, gone for now. Alrato.

-A young man, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Hey, how many kinds of Gs are there? Are there wise Gs, Gs who have realized a better way of life, Gs who have gone straight? What are these kind of Gs called? Thanks for sharing memories of your happier times. We're waiting for another series from you, by the way.

One Phone Call: Make it Fast

I will like to talk to God and my love ones that left me:

"I know I won't have a lot of time so we will have to make it fast!"

I will say "I'm mad, 'cause y'all left me here and did not let me know ahead up. But, I know ya'll in a better place.

Shine down on me and take me to the right path, to where I can do something with my life 'til it's my time to go. I don't know when it my time, but I just want a good life.

I have two min left -- I love y'all and shine the right way in life and stay by my side. See you when I get there.

God: Don't take no more people from me please Lord.

-Awwwman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This phone conversation/lament/blues/prayer/celebration is like a burst of emotion on a quiet day. You'll see them when you get there, but don't be in too much of a hurry, because you have so much to do right here!

Goofy

You was solid...
You was my "Ride or die"...
You gave me your heart an' soul...
Without you...I was incomplete...
My world was a mess...
Drugs an' alcohol... fullfilled my soul...
I cheated and I'm truly... Sorry...
My life is messed up!
You were the reason...Why I smiled...
You told me...
I can love you as much as I can hate you
I thought it was a joke...
But now...
I've realized that you...
Hate me...
As much as you once loved me...
I'm sorry if I broke your heart...
Broken promises and make-believe lies...
Is how we kept our relationship...
For that reason...
I feel like shhh without you.

-Brownie

From The Beat: Why does he hate you? Have you done things to him to give him a reason to hate you? Both hate and love are powerful emotions, and sometimes one can easily become the other. But one thing we're confident about — when love turns to hate, it's only a matter of time before a new love wipes out the bad feelings from the old one.

Violence And Love

Violence is an act that cannot be taken back
Love is a feeling, it can be healing
Violence can lead to love
And love can lead to violence
Violence is an ending
While love is a beginning
Violence for some is what makes them love
Love of violence is a feeling of dying
I can love or I can be violent
It's like the sun shine in day
That slowly turns to night
So...
Violence is an act that cannot be taken back
Love is a feeling, it can be healing

-Ash Night

From The Beat: Have you experienced both? Which was more rewarding?

Home Away From Home

Always waking up wit' a hangover.
Coulda sworn last night I was sober,
but I had to hit the dosha
and my second home said I had to stay over.
Got up hit the block 'cause I'm going take over.
And my second home is the next house over.

-G

From The Beat: We had to shorten your Beat name because we don't know what the letters mean... So, how long do you think you'll be able to spend at the "next house over" if you go back to the block to "take over?"

Streets

The reason that people are running the streets is because the streets will always be there for you. When I was running the streets I thought that they where there to help me but until I found out that you can not trust most people that are calling themselves your friends. I tried to do that and it got me three years and I got shot, stabbed over the people that called themselves my closest folks. I really thought that I could run back to them, but I found out that I have to choose wisely.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Choosing your friends wisely goes along with choosing your own actions wisely. It seems to us that you are getting some wisdom that comes with maturity, and that if you are able to follow your own mind, and not fall to the pressure of others, you will be moving into an entirely different and far better future. Don't forget what you've learned.

My Violent Life

I was a few years old when I first experienced violence. And since then I have experienced violence left and right. When I first experienced violence I tripped over a laundry basket and began to cry. Then Ed, my bio-dad, came in and started to whip me with his belt. As that happened, my mom shoved him away from me and called the cops. When the cops came they arrested Ed and he was jailed for a few days.

When I was in kindergarten through elementary I always went around beating people up (kids and teachers) so much that for middle school I was sent to a group home in Hollister. I have also seen a lot of violence on T-V; for example, when I was about ten I saw Scream and was scared out of my wits. Also when I was in my teens, I saw a document drama about the infamous "Black Hawk Down" incident in Somalia and could only watch about twenty or so minutes of it before I got so appalled at the graphics and violence that I turned of the T.V. Sadly to say I have seen, heard about, and been a victim to countless acts of violence and I don't want to see/hear about anymore.

-Nick

From The Beat: There are many forms of violence and violence are always surrounding us these days, The one you are talking about is the most common one, and one that people learn most from.

It's Not Only Me

When I get locked up, I know that I'm not the only one doing time. When I come in, so does the rest of my family. I know my mom gets hurt because I can hear it in her voice when she comes to visit. I can see it in my dad's eyes, that he wants me back at home and on the bike.

But it all comes down to my little brother who just takes it all in. My mom tells me that my brother misses how we used to ride bikes and play basketball. I know he looks up to me but, I hope he doesn't follow me here.

-Luke

From The Beat: If you know your little brother looks up to you, it's most likely that he will follow your steps. Kids at a young age really don't know what's right and wrong. They tend to follow their role models. In this case, you. Since it's pretty much certain that your little brother will follow your footsteps, why not change the direction your footsteps are taking you... Walk a path that you would also want your little brother to walk, and you can't go wrong.

Loving It All

Slashing, ripping
Loving it all,
Kissing, touching
Screaming of pain

Bleeding, crying
Begging for more,
Laughing, smiling
It drives you insane

Nails and blades shoved in your back
Soft whispers in your ears,
I'll drain you
And I'll destroy your fears

With the pain inside my mind
I'll bring you back to life
With the love in your head,
I'll bring you down until you are dead

-Izzy

From The Beat: You're skating on thin ice by asking The Beat to publish this powerful poem with its very disturbing images. Are you a fan of Edgar Allan Poe? We think you'd find his poetry and short stories very interesting.

Trying To Change

I was trying to change but I can't because I like to gang bang. This is the only problem that stop me to don't change. That why I think that is hard,

When I got inside the gang, I was putting work because I do care for my homies. So when I start, I can't stop. In the other part of my want to change, but it's hard. So I can't stop gang banging. I won't stop.

-Lil' Mousy

Form The Beat: Mousy, your last line was true! It's not that you can't stop, but that you don't want to stop. You are constantly fighting a battle with your inner-self telling you to change while the other tells you to keep banging. Like a drug addict, you want to change but you like the effects of the drug too much to do it by yourself. All we can tell you is a lot of people who started banging and loved it, ended up leaving the gangs when they grew to value themselves as individuals, special and unique. We hope you come to value yourself over any group. You owe it to yourself, and you owe it to the next generation, meaning your kids.

Alone?

Am I dong time alone? That what you ask, I tell you, "No." God's been by my side since day one. Even though am not with my family I know we will be together soon.

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: Well, you're very lucky to have God by your side. But can we ask you, are you by God's side?

Earliest Memories

My earliest memory of violence... I was 11 years old when I was on street. When I saw fight on the street. Then the cops came so they could stop the fight. And people coming up and stuff. And at school people fighting over breezy.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: Have you been a victim of violence? Have you been violent against others?

Calling God

If I had only one phone call, I will call God and talk to him about me or things I'm missing that I had in my life. Also talk to you, God, and how you made this world. I want to learn more about You and me. But also have God make a three-way to my dead family to chat with them because I didn't know them a lot.

-Joshua

From The Beat: So, you think God would hook you up with a conference call to your family members? Who, in particular, would you like to talk to? What would you talk about?

I Am Not Doing Time By Myself

I think I am not doing time by myself because being in here affects my family as well. Since I'm here, life goes on, but it does not go the same way. Without me, my family is hurting. I hear it in their voice on the phone and I see it in their faces when they leave from visits. When I was on the phone talking to my sister telling her I have to do a year even though I been here since I was seventeen.

Now I'm about to be nineteen. So I will be shipped to county jail on my birthday. Telling this to my sister crushed her. I could hear the tone in her voice changed. That also hurt me. Now realizing what I do not only hurts me, but it hurts the people around you.

My sister looks up to me a lot. Now that I'm not there, her grades started to slip. Soon as I found out I talked to her and asked what's wrong, and she said it's hard going through this. She feels she needs me there for her to do good, so I told her to put forth her best effort and she will do fine.

After that talk, she started to do much better, It's not all A's like it used to be, but it's up there. I feel me not being there is a big impact on her life and losing me hurt so much. But this time will go by soon enough to where I will be there for her.

-James

From The Beat: James, keep you head up and don't ever let anyone or anything break your spirit. You are a good writer who is not shy to express your feeling or even share your thoughts among you peers. We know you have a bright path ahead of you and you can become someone that will make a difference — not just in you and your sister's lives, but in this world. Good luck!

It's Too Late

Love!

It can be given, given away like a box of chocolates or a beautiful bouquet. It's a struggle like an unending battle. It can't be taken away. It's an expression given even to your mother, father, brothers, and sisters. It could be a friend or someone unknown, It builds like character. Its bond seems to stretch farther and farther. It's bright and brilliant with a price like no other.

It speak in many different tongues and special ways. It can't bought. It excludes imitators. It can be graceful or painful. It could be used and abused. It could be a lie. It steals trust, dismantles one's life. It may cloud your vision.

It hard to understand, but once you get it, it's too late! They're gone!

My dad has passed before I could tell him how much I cared and how the whole family loved him for trying to give us best, even if he had to suffer. So if I had one last chance, I would tell him thank you and how much I love him.

-Lost Father

From The Beat: This is both an essay on love brilliantly written by poet, as well as a sweet and deeply felt expression of love. Your father would be proud. Volumes have been written on what love means. We think you captured it.

Are You Doing It By Yourself

Sometimes when I'm locked up I ask myself the same question. Am I doing it by myself? But no, because I'm in here with people giving me a lot of attention. The attention that makes you worry. The kind that makes people lonely. The sadness when people feel that something is missing.

When you're locked up, you think a lot and go reminiscing. Sometimes in your room you think and wonder about what you're gonna do when you get out. I usually think about smoking and chillin' with no problem at the outs. But I know what's gonna happen because I'm going to be on probation. I'm gonna be locked up again getting the same kind of attention.

-Lazyfoo

From The Beat: Don't you get tired of being lonely? Don't you get tired of being told what to do, when to eat, or even sleep? Don't you get tired of always wondering when the day will come that you will walk out that gate, or what other people are doing right now? If you do, then maybe it's time for a change, huh? When you think about your freedom, you think about smoking and chilling "with no problem," and that's where you'll fall, because we all have problems. It's how you deal with those problems that will determine who you become and whether you'll live in freedom. What do you think?

The Importance Of Friendship

Without friends, life would be boring, lonely, and meaningless. Nobody comes to high school for the teachers, not really. We come to see our friends, to see what they're wearing, who they're going with, who they broke up with, and where they're going this weekend. In between that, we go to classes.

Friends make life exciting. A phone call from a friend on a boring Friday night can bring a spark to an evening that would have been spent just watching TV. Going to San Bruno alone is no fun. Going to San Bruno with a friend can be an adventure. We sit in Lomita Park and laugh at uptight businessmen, all dressed alike in suits and black ties. Alone, it's just another boring trip with no one to talk to.

With no friends to talk to or to go places with, life can be very lonely. It' sad to be alone, wanting to share your thoughts with a friend and having no one there, except maybe your little brother or sister to be with. Sometimes I feel so alone I just want to cry. That's why I'm thankful that I have good friends like Trooper and Browney, who always will be and are there when I need them.

When the bad times come, like when someone in the barrio dies, a friend is the most important thing in the world. We try to help the home boys as much as we can. I have many friends who care about me. All of us, as friends, can survive the situations.

-Chucky

From The Beat: You are so right, Chucky. Having friends can turn the worst situation into something tolerable or even better than tolerable. And, without friends, even the most exciting adventure can seem empty. You are lucky to have such good friends, and they are lucky to have you who understands the importance of good friends. Continue to cherish the friendships you have, and don't let them go.

My First Violent Memory

My first memory of violence is when I was about, like, uhhh, probably like hella young, like a few years old and my cousin beat some guy for talking smack. And, uh yeah, then it was violence for me.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Do you have a memory of this violence? Do you remember anything more than these two sentences? It must have scared you to still remember it after all this time.

Pen And Sword

I use the pen 'cause the pen is mightier then the sword. But you must always keep a sword handy for when the pen fails.

By saying this, I mean that there is more than just violence. What comes from inside is stronger than any weapon you take out. "Words" are the strongest weapons that you can take out. You can take out an enemy just by pulling the trigger. But that doesn't make you a man. Your words are what make you a man.

The pen is your words. The sword is your gun, knife, etc. Be smart, have knowledge, think about which one will keep you out of jail. But if that does not work take out your sword. That's why I say keep your sword, never leave it behind. Use your pen before any other weapon because what goes around comes around.

-Ron

From The Beat: This is very well said, Ron. You are truly expressing the power of the pen. Words can move nations. What do you say to people Some great thinkers like Gandhi and Martin Luther King used their words to say that resisting with moral power always is more powerful than resisting with fire power. They said never rely on the sword. What would you say to them? Keep writing what you think.

Death Won't Do Us Apart

Being with you is the high,
That gets me by,
I love it when you make me laugh,
But I hate it when you make me mad,
You're indeed my second half,
But I hate it when you make me sad,
I'm sure we can make it last,
If only we forget the past,
My days in here are going fast,
These days ain't really gonna last,
Soon I'll have my freedom back,
But they'll always be something that I lack,
The road of life is full of curves and hills,
It's very different from popping pills,
Sometimes your words are so cold that they give me chills,
But I guess that's part of life,
Are you down with being my wife,
I wanna be with you forever, not ever death will do us apart,
Our bodies buried together,
Inside of our coffins forever.

-Juanito

From The Beat: Relationships are much more difficult in reality than they are as we imagine them. It seems like you and she have already had some rough times together, so we're not sure you should be looking for a life-long commitment at this point. It sounds really nice, but maybe you should do a trial run first, so you could see whether it's a good fit over time. But whatever, we hope whoever you wrote this poem for will get to read it.

I'm Sorry

I miss you so much,
And I'm fiending fo' yo' touch,
Missing yo' pretty lips,
And those lil' thighs and pretty hips,
You're the second half to this heart in pain,
I'm in pain because I left you in the rain,
You might be dry,
But inside I cry,
For leaving you alone,
Like a dog without a bone,
I accept your apology,
'Cause baby it's nothing,
But can you accept mine,
And show me you ain't frontin',
Show me that you love me,
And that you're down to ride,
'Cause baby in reality it's only you by my side.

-Casper

From The Beat: It's interesting how many young men remember how much they were in love with the person they left behind only after they get locked up with a bunch of other young men! What kind of a sign do you want from her, and what is your definition of "down to ride?" If it's what it sounds like, then clearly you still love something else more than her.

Violence

Cops beating down the door,
Yelling open the door,
Da door is on the floor,
And they're rushing indoors,
Opening cabinets,
And opening drawers,
Not caring any less,
That they're making a mess,
All the commotion,
For a little bit of crack,
All of the noise for just a rock,
My uncle is on the floor in cuffs,
And I'm sitting there asking,
If he's coming back,
With tears down my face,
From my uncle's disgrace.

-Juan

From The Beat: You have turned this frightening memory of unnecessary official violence into art, which itself is remarkable! It's terrible that you had to see this at such a young age. Have you written other things about this event?

Not Doing Time Alone

I know that I'm not doing time by myself because my actions affect everyone that I come into contact with. My family is doing every minute of every hours of every day that I'm doing. All this time and pain that I'm going through, wishing I could be home with my family here suffering that same pain.

Something has to change and change fast, I recently turned 18 and am getting off probation in 25 days. If I don't get a grip on my life now, I will forever live in misery. It's a lot harder to change when you're older, and I don't want to be one of those people.....

-G.

From The Beat: Change is never easy, so take it one step at a time, G. Don't rush yourself or else you will be putting too much pressure and straining yourself. Make sure you are willing to ask for help and support when you need to. Change is not a one person 's job. We all benefit from the support of other.

The Voice Of Death

The Voice of Death
Will steal a breath
During day or night
Unseen or in sight
It's insanity
Will topple thee

The tree of light
Will bring delight
Till darkness falls
And binds its walls

A fast retreat
Yet so discrete
A mystery
Held secretly
Nobody knows
The spirits close
Joyous withdrawn
Everything gone

Life at an end
A dream to mend
A wish untold
A gift to hold

The gates open
A living sin
Inviting guests
Creating nests
A type of dread
No tears to shed

Seeping through blood
Starting to flood
Memories show
Thoughts won't flow

Problems untwine
Moments confine
Spirits afloat
A welcoming note
A haunting place
A common case

None can reclaim
No one to blame
One short to play
One less to pray

A creation unmatched
A seedling unhatched
Power unmet
An ending set
A sheer disgrace
A life to face

An overthrown soul
An accustomed role
An unvoiced depth
The Voice of Death

-Squiggly

From The Beat: This is such a mysterious poem, we have to wonder how it developed? What were you thinking about when you wrote it? For this one, we need a sheet of explanations. We know that these images relate to real events in your life, but we don't know those events so we can't understand the images. Why not write us a piece explaining each stanza of your poem?

My Life Story

To me, being black means that I just have to work hard to get anywhere in life. I did not care about anybody but family until I started to get locked up, and realized that there are other people in the world that are going through the same things that I am. I really did not care but always it ran in my mind that instead of taking things, that I should give no matter what.

That's why me being locked up does not matter to me because the police take your freedom and you get mad, but they are also saving your life too. Just think until I went to court and found out how much time I got, three years, it was hard on me. But that's just three years that I got to turn my life around. So I am at least going to make an effort to do that.

The reason that my age group always go back to the streets is because that all they know. It's not because we don't want to change, it's not that easy. But it's how much you try to change.

Man, I have seen it all in the streets. It was fun, but now my friends are out there because they snitch on me. That just is to help me to choose the people that I choose to be my friends, to read past how fast they jump and how fast they are there to tell you no or to stop you from doing something. Man, I am not a punk, just speaking the real.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Yes, you are speaking the real. It's very encouraging to read that you are making the decision to stop doing some things, even if they were fun, because they hurt a lot of people. Some people never learn from the mistakes they make. Other people, like you, make mistakes, learn from them, and move forward. Good luck!

My Earliest Memory Of Violence?

Everything happen when I was nine years old. I was kicking it in my homie's house getting drunk and suddenly I heard gun fires around my block. And then I saw a few of my homegirls running through the apartment crying. I ask them what happened and they told me that my best homie from my 'hood got killed in the corner. Ever since my homie Lil' Puppet got killed, I started to do drugs and got jump in to the clicka, and my twin brother was looking up to that homie. Now we don't got nothing but memories.

-Drifter

From The Beat: You know, Drifter, as hard as this loss must have been, it is not was made you start doing drugs. You were already getting drunk at nine years old, which may well be the first violence you experienced — to your maturing brain function. We are not joking when we tell you that we think you did violence to yourself long before you had that terrible experience you described. How often is drinking a part of your coming here? Does that tell you something?

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

My earliest memory of violence was when I was about fifteen years old. The thing that happen was some people from a gang shanked my cousin. It was on a Sunday afternoon when I went to his crib and kicked it for awhile until we went to church because it was the day where they put a cross in your forehead with the ashes. So we go to church and everything goes well.

After church, my parents tell me to go home with them, but I said no, that I was going with him instead. So I did. We go eat and after that we start walking through a dark street, and we see a lot of gang members outside an abandon house. One of them comes up to us and tells us my cousin what he banged, and he told him what we were representing. So he said alright, and leaves and so do we.

About two blocks down, when we are almost getting to my cousin's house, we hear someone yelling, "Hey," and we turn around and see like seven of them running towards us. We stop, and out of nowhere one of them stabs my cousin next to his waist and leg and then take off running.

-Silencer

From The Beat: That is definitely a terrible thing to see and a harsh memory for you to walk around with. How did this incident change your life? Are the effects of this still with you? Did it make you want to be or do something different? How is your cousin?

To The Beat

My teacher said to write to The Beat about some stuff
I really don't like writing and I think I've had enough

The words are all arranged in a funny sort of way
That you cannot understand if you try and try all day

There's beats about the flowers and poems about the trees
I think that I'd do crazy if I tried to write like these

She said listen to my music, but my music makes good sense
'Cause rappers speak in street talk, and are never hard or dense

So I'm going to tell my teacher that I'm not going to fight it,
I did my best with writing but I just couldn't write it.

-Chucky

From The Beat: You did a good job here, Chucky. Next time you write, if you don't know what to write, just write whatever comes to mind. (At the same time, we had to cut one of your pieces — "What I want My Homeboys To Know" — because it was not appropriate and another — "Thinking Of San Bruno" — because it was plagiarized!)

Jingle Bell, The Living Hell

I'm sitting in this cell,
Thinking about all the good times I used to have,
Wondering how the hell could I have fell,
To this vicious drug named crack,
Crack and crystal meth got me in this cell,
In which I am back and forth like the jingle of a bell,
How the hell could I have fell and turned my life a living hell,
For those of you who can compare,
To the jingle of a bell,
For those of you that fell,
And turned your life a living hell,
Don't give up and put that chrome,
Next to the right side of your dome,
But do your time,
And go on home,
Or call your mother on the phone,
'Cause when you have fallen and can't get up,
Your mother will be there to pick you up,
Tell your mother that you love her and buy her roses while you can,
So you can see the happiness and joy across her face,
Don't do it when it's late,
And she has passed away,
Because if you do it then,
It's far too late,
To see the joy,
Across her face.
It's far too late
It's far too late!
I love you mom!

-Flaco

From The Beat: Wow! This is a terrific poem, on many levels. We know how depressing incarceration can be, so your advice to go on to the next day so you can go on home is the best advice there is. But what you say about your mother, and by extension to everyone you love, is wonderful advice that applies to all of us. There is this saying in Chinese, "Cherish the person that is in front of you eyes right now." Thank you for reminding us.

The Problem

I think that I know what the problem is. The problem is that little kids kick it with older people. Like when I was small, I just was kickin' it with my older brothers and their homeboys. I saw what they used to do, and at first I didn't like it. But after I started likin' it.

They used to smoke weed and fight and not go to school and stuff like that. After when I was growing up, I used to do and still do the same stuff. That's why I think that little kids should kick it with kids their own age. I know that I won't change now because I put it down for my barrio. I'm sorry Beat but I don't want to change, and I won't. I don't care if I end up dead or locked up for the rest of my life.

-Chucky

From The Beat: Chucky, no need to say sorry to us because it's you that's going to be sorry, not us. The ones you should say sorry to are the ones that love you and that you say you love, because they are the ones that you will hurt the most. They are the ones that will be shedding tears for you every time you get hurt or locked up. (You may actually believe that you don't care of you get locked up for life, but we know that's not true. The truth is, you don't believe that will happen, and that is a belief that was shared by every lifer doing time in our bloated state prison system. Like you, none of them thought their life would end in prison, but...) The life you live is the life you choose — which means you are also choosing your own consequences. It doesn't matter if you are right or wrong about how you got into it. You're no longer a child, so now the decisions you make become your responsibility. We're not here to tell you what to do, but we are here to tell you that we hope you grow up soon enough to avoid the results of living that life you chose as a child...

Violence In Childhood

The first time in my life when I really saw and experienced a lot of violence was in my childhood years. Growing up, I saw my parents and family involved in gangs, into drugs always fighting with each other. That's all I would see growing up. A lot of time I felt sad, scared, and looking up to my older cousins.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Do you think is that changed the way you chose to live your life? As you get older, do you think about these things more. Do you ever wish to live an entirely different sort of life with your own children?

Being Locked Up

To me being locked up did not matter until I came in here this time. It was the same day that I got shot, and I didn't think that I should be there.

But when I went to court I found out that the judge is trying to give me three years in CYA. I have started to change and by change, I have been able to ask to talk to people without feeling embarrassed and things like that. But the main thing is that I started to learn that being here is also a positive is some ways because if I had not be here then I would have been on the outs getting into more trouble than what I am in right now.

When I was making my choices I was not thinking about what was going to happen when I got caught, because I would not want to think about that type of things because I would be considered a square. But now I am ready to be called anything because I found out that the people that I was calling my friends were not real because they snitch. But karma came back around.

So what I am trying to say is to people that ready to take time to listen to people, don't think that they squares because what they say or how they act because you will never know who fake or not.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: It's easy to fall under the spell of peer pressure, especially when they are calling you names for trying to succeed in this world. One sign of growing up is the realization that your own opinion about who you are and who you want to be is really the only opinion that counts. Whether your so-called homies are true friends or not, what they think about you is far, far less important than what you think about yourself. You should never be embarrassed about what you think and what you say, and you should certainly never be embarrassed about trying to better your situation and your future. Keep making those changes, and soon you'll be able to look back on this situation from an entirely different perspective.

My Feelings

I'm feeling so much pain,
It hurts so bad that I can't explain
All I know is I feel lonely and sad,
I want to cry an' take out all the bad,
As hard as I try no tears come out,
The people I miss I'm not without
I've never felt like this before,
I've always been hard to the core,
And that's what people always see,
But today I don't feel like a G,
I'm thinking of my mom and how she cries for me
I want her to live happy and in harmony
She always tells me, if I change she'll be happy.
But my life is crazy an' hella crappy
I'm hard-headed like coco,
I've tried to change my life but I've already gone loco.
My feelings right now vary from madness to sadness,
From a smile to a frown
I feel like a clown
Smile now but later I cry
Feel confused an' don't know why
I'm goin' to sleep, hoping tomorrow I'll feel better,
I just want to sleep an' tomorrow get my shhh together,
For today I've done my part,
But remember I speak from the heart.

-Magik

From The Beat: Why wait till tomorrow to get your shhh together? What are you waiting for? It sounds like you are beginning to weigh things in your life from a more adult perspective, realizing that you have not been helping yourself as much as you've been helping others. Now's the time to get it together, to examine your life realistically, to decide what kind of a life you want (especially a life of freedom), and to set your feet down on a new path that leads in that direction.

Being Black

To me being black means that I just have to work hard to get to where I want to get in life. I did not start to think about it until I started to get locked up because I realized that many things were unfair to the black community.

But people that I have been talking to help me to get past all the hate and to still show some kind of love to the people that disrespect you because they trying to fight the same feelings that you are. That is why they choose to do what they did and now that they are locked up. They think that everyone is out to get them, but really they are just trying to help in a way that they have to use discipline, because with no discipline there will be people taking advantage of one another.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Of course, when you are locked up, discipline is imposed on you. But how do you discipline yourself when you are free? We agree that the deck is stacked against young black men (in particular), but that doesn't mean you can't overcome the obstacles and achieve your goals. If you have the discipline you write about, you can accomplish whatever you set your mind to.

Follow

Before I got locked up, I never thought of actually being locked up. I just thought the law couldn't stop me. And my whole life I was told that I'm going to end up like my brother, but I didn't believe anyone. I should've stopped messing up when I got my first offense.

My brother has been in a bunch of rehab and been locked up a lot of times. I never wanted to be like my brother. Everyone would warn me what would happen, but I would just blow them off, Then after a while I kept messing up and end up in Hillcrest with my brother.

-Kyle

From The Beat: It's still not too late to start listening now. The California prison system is busting at the seams with young men who that the law can't stop them. Are you in trouble because of your brother, or because of you? What's going on that both of you have ended up in juvenile hall?

To The Beat Within

I'm locked up and only my family and my friends care. That's the only people that care. My probation officer don't care. That's how I feel. Well, I'm trying to make this my last time here locked up because this is not the life I want to live in. I have homies that are doing life and I don't want to live that life. I would rather be in the outs with my family and friends because I think there is more to life then just in here locked up.

-Chucky

From The Beat: Chucky, you are right. There is more to life than just being locked up. You have the knowledge to keep yourself free, because you know what leads to losing your freedom. Don't "try" to make this your last time, MAKE IT your last time!

I'm Back

Hi Beat, I'm back behind bars. But I'm just letting you know that the life that I once lived I don't live anymore. I came back for no real reason. I found out that life has more to offer than just gangbanging or coming to jail. The time that I once wasted in here, I know I'm not going to get it back. And if I could go back and fix my life up, I would. And it's a good thing that I change my negative life that I once lived.

Back then I was a rider, but I am over that. I hope that all you people putting in work realize there's more to life than just your 'hoods. Make choices yourself not to what your homeboys or homegirls make. Alright then, alratos.

-Enfadoso

From The Beat: We especially hate those words, "I'm back" or "I'm back again". However, we do see the changes in you through your wise and mature words. We hope this time, for whatever reason that you are back (a reason is a reason; there's not such thing as for "no real reason"), you are going to get out soon and make this your truly last time. We hope we can soon read from you: "Hey Beat, I am writing your guys from home..." You can grace our Big Beat BWO pages as one of those writers who made it in life.

I'm Lonely Every Time

Every time I'm in here, I'm lonely. Thinking about what's going on out there. Every time I get arrested, these words is what I think about: "Damn, why did I do that?"

My parents care about me a lot, but I keep going back and forth in this garbage. I don't wanna see them crying because of some stupid thing that I did. I'm tired of being in here. I can't wait till I get that freedom again.

-Rodney

From The Beat: Don't worry, that freedom will come one day, but it's how you are going to hold on to that freedom that matters. If you're truly tired of being here, you'll know what you have to give up in order to stay out of here.

Are You Doing Time By Yourself

I think that when you get locked up, you do time with your family, because the ones that love you are going to miss the same way they going to miss you. Also the people that look up to you may wind up doing the same thing you are doing.

When I get locked up, I think my mom blamed herself for letting me do what I wanted to do. I also think that my mom and sisters are worried as the same as me worried about them. I also think they cry like me when I miss them terribly like when I'm about to go to sleep or when I'm going to eat.

-Juan Jose

From The Beat: You mean your family does time with you, right? It's easier not to remember this when you're locked up than when you're able to make your own choices again. So, we hope that once you do get out, you won't forget what you have said today to prevent yourself from getting locked up again.

My Family

When I was outside, I didn't care about nothing. Before I said that I will never change and I wasn't appreciate my family. But today I am lock up and now I know that I was hurting my family and they still with me. Now I know how important is my family to me.

Right now I am try to change, but is hard. But the reason I am try to change is because I love too much my family and I'm not going to hurt my family again. Now, when I get out I'm going to dedicate my all time to my family and take care of my family without look the past.

-Mere

From The Beat: Isn't is funny that as human beings we don't know how to cherish the things that are in front of us until we finally lose them? When you are free again and with your family, will you remember how much you missed them when you were locked up. Cherish the ones you love and remember the words you have written today.

I Was Doing Good

When I was outside, I was doing good, spending time with my family. It was something good because I care a lot for them, so I miss them now because I can't be there with them. I'm locked up now, and it's not good. Here you wake up early and they tell you what to do.

In the outs it is different because you could wake up any time and do what you want. So I hate to be locked up.

-Lil' Mousy

From The Beat: You say you hate to be locked up and yet, you also say you can't stop gang banging. You say you care for your homies, and you say you miss you family. Have you ever heard the expression, "You can' t have your cake and eat it too"? This is a situation where that applies. The measure of which you love more will be in what you do, and not in what you say.

It Affects My Family

It affects my family because I can't be at home with them and it affects me because I can't be at my 'hood and spend time with my loved ones.

-Smiley

From The Beat: In what other ways is your family affected when you get locked up? Can you elaborate some more? We're pretty sure that you can produce more than a single sentence.

My Life

I'm trying to write about my life.
The only thing that hits me is the tears falling down my eyes
when I was younger. My jefita told me, "Do right.
Don't do silly things," But what did I do? I was living that gangsta
life, full of sins. My world was cold as ice,
had no one to depend on. So the Bay Area calles were my way
of kicking it with the homies that were listo for desmadre and
down to bust a hole and catch a case.
Now, as I see clearly and I realize it was just a waste,
a bad nasty taste in my mouth,
I was filled with lies form the inside out.
My next step was to get away from this nightmare.
Cocaine was the only thing helping me bear.
It wasn't no "natural high"
Even though it had me flying high in the sky, I wanted to die.
Nothing seem right. But now as I sit here in my room,
"Gracias al Señor." He never left me alone.
I gave my life to God. This is the beginning of a new story line. "
So let me put a smile on your face because if not, then it's just a
waste.

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: Sometimes people use drugs to escape reality, not thinking about another kind of reality: the damage the drugs will do to their health and mind. It feels easier to run away from the problems than to face it. But all it does is defer the time we have to face things, and by then, the things we have to face have grown even more difficult. We hope the next time you write, you will write about the beginning of your new story.

Rainy Days

See, we all need rainy days in our lives.
When everything seems hard and tears are fallin' down your eyes,
they're like rain drops letting out what you feel inside.
I never told you I love you but every time I was beside
you, I felt so much joy and pride. Now the only thing left or do is
cry.
I can't hide what I feel inside,
but it's too late now
I had you but I lost you now you gone.

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: Sometimes people do not know how to cherish someone until they lose them. Sometimes we don't even know how we truly feel until we are all alone.

Spring

I like spring and I when spring break arrives. I also like listening to the birds and the bees. One time I drove to Modesto to visit my uncle and once I got there it was really quiet because we were in the middle of nowhere. I had a good time even though I didn't have my metro.

-Gg

From The Beat: Sometimes quietness can the be most wonderful sound, but some people from the city can be afraid of the night sounds. How did you like the silence?

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

My earliest memory of real violence was when we went to the park
to play ball,
ended up seeing one of my homeboys fall.
It was a depressing moment;
I knew it was because of gang involvement.
The feeling of it was like a medieval torture method —
your limbs tied to different horses pulling in different directions.

-Lazyfoo

From The Beat: Sorry Lazyfoo, we had to cut a couple of references out from your piece because they were not inappropriate for The Beat. Lots of people read what you write, including people in the system. This is a very violent memory, but we doubt it is your earliest.

Stay

I've been in the streets my whole life. I miss the streets so much. I miss the OG's. I went to jail in 2004, been locked up ever since.

When I get back out I'm going to get my life together. I'm going to get me a job. I'm going to find a beautiful girl and get married. The streets are dangerous, but keep your head up, stay strong and solid.

-Lil' Bebe

From The Beat: If the OGs really want you free and strong, they won't let you run the streets, they won't expect you to be "solid" in their game. They won't want you on the streets, they'll want you in school, safe, moving forward with your life. When you get out, you need to find older people that push you towards the best, not towards the darkness.

A Young Teen

When I was fourteen years old I first experienced violence in Oakland. Remembering that stuff it makes me sad because that person got jumped. It was someone who I didn't know but I felt sorry for that person. The first experience was hard for me to think about when I go to sleep.

-DeShan

From The Beat: The worst thing is that the first time we see terrible violence or injustice, we're shocked. Then the next time, a little less shocked. Eventually we just get used to it and think of it as "business as usual," and we forget how bad and wrong it really is. If you still remember that experience as hard, that means you have held on to your knowledge that it's wrong, that people deserve better... it also means you have kept one of the most precious parts of your humanity – your compassion. Hold onto that, no matter what.

Going Out Of My Mind

I'm in the hall going freaking crazy and I'm saying it that way, because it's been hard on me. I was suppose to get out on E.M. when my mom told my PO that I should stay in the hall. Another reason why I'm going crazy is because I might be going to the new hall. Then again, I know I'm going to the new hall so I stay stressed.

So what I got to say to ninjas that's coming to the hall. This boy Mark saying, "stay out."

-Mark

From The Beat: It may be hard for you to see where your mom is coming from, but at least try. Look at all the young adults who are getting killed on your streets. She may feel a lot less stressed knowing at least you're safe. That may, or may not be the reason, but try to see the reason behind every decision. That's good advice that you give, hopefully you take your own advice and not come back. That way you won't have to go crazy up in there.

Messed Up By Moms

I'm in this place stressing about why I'm in here. Then it all came to me, my moms the reason. I don't really get along with her but I sometimes talk to her. I would like to get along with her but it's hard. It's hard because we seem to always get angry at one another. We don't talk to each other about personal things. That's just how it's been for years. So I guess it's because of mom.

-Mark

From The Beat: Do you believe that there are two sides to every story? What would your mom say about this situation? It's easy to put the blame on someone, and we're not saying you're wrong or right, but try to look at your part as well. What role are you playing in this lack of communication? Sometimes we have to swallow our pride to get what we really want to happen. Do you think that's worth it? A relationship between a mother and child can be very special, hopefully yours will grow to that level.

Guess Right

Wheel of fortune guess right or you losin' yo' chips
Yeah my hands up tight let me losin' my clips
Got the game on lock I ain't losin' grip
I ain't going back to the block, I'm not whipping up shhh
You can hit my line all you want talking about bricks
Sorry dude, I ain't no snitch
What I look like switchin' the feeling
Can't see myself getting caught up like Marvin with the "sexual healing"
Yeah haters gon' hate and I see y'all grilling
Gotta accept what you can't change dawg, I'm in the building
One-hundred stacks in my pocket that's why I'm limpin'
Yo' girl wanna join the team that's why she talking like I'm pimpin'
Runnin' back like Emmit I play when I'm injured
Comeback like to the Hall, I'm coming back with all the winnings
Use to make my money on the block
couple thousand notes
I'm gonna make millls popping so that's all she wrote
This is the life of a real dude, take some notes.

-G

From The Beat: You rhyme tight/you time right/you dime bright/talkin' 'bout how you gamin' while everyone else starvin'/how you bad like Emmit and sweet like Marvin/But by the end you start slippin'/with that jaw about limpin' and pimpin'/stacks in your pocket, money on the block/but you already seen keys turn in a lock/with you trapped inside 'cause the system took you in/if you live by these rules/they'll get you again.

Don't Know Why

What up y'all , this ya boy Lil' Tae up in camp doing a good program. I go home this weak. Just making sure I do what I gotta do to get out of here, and don't come back.

I ain't trippin', this program is easy and I'm 'bout to finish it. I seen three people run that was doing a good program. I don't know why they did but that's them. I'm out.

RIP Ronald Brazier. Gone but never forgotten.

-Lil' Tae

From The Beat: Pressure makes people do crazy things...but you've managed to do a good program without breaking – which means that you can do a good program of your own (a plan for success designed by you yourself, not an institution) once you get home too. You did it in here, you can do it out there. Write to The Beat and tell us how you're doing out there. You've graduated onto The Beat Without! Peace.

Searchin' Through My Heart

The happiness of the day have just come to light
It's my woman and son that's shining so bright
Teeth showing her hair swinging side to side
This is my life that will make me lay down and die
Emotions in my heart that make me cry
"I need my family, that's why"
Alone with your heart inside my eyes
But as long as you in my heart of night all I do is cry
Put me down in your soul the way I locked you down
I need you forever, in my heart right now

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: It's good to see you reach towards what gives you light, even in all this darkness. What was your relationship with your girl like before you got locked up? Was it good, was it strong, did you treat her well and did she treat you well? We ask because we know it's a lot easier to write a love poem than to live one. And, like you, we want this relationship to work out!

Miss Me Real Bad

The most important parent is my mom and I know she and my niece and nephew would miss me real bad, when I'm in jail.

-Darius

From The Beat: Do you miss them too? Your niece and nephew must look up to you, no? We hope you get home soon!

Lucky Home Visit

What it do Beat, this is Lil T, still at camp. I did eight months in this thing, but now I got court next Friday for my release day. Last turf visit went stupid.

On Friday we went to a party and it was hella deep too. I found more than 150 dollars at a party, and that's what made my day. It wasn't a lot but it was a one second come up. But fo' all you who comin' to camp, do yo' program . Six months go quick, get cho' money on yo' turf visits and pimp this shhh.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: You can see how hearing you call it a "turf visit" might get us worried, right? You already know how much faith we have in your potential for greatness and success, but that party was no where for you to be, for a bunch of reasons. You got lucky that time, but luck runs out/When you're done with camp what are you about?

Before

I remember when I was younger I was a little good boy. I used to listen to my parents, go to school and do everything that was good. I used to come home every day when school was over. But now I'm in camp Sweeney because I turned bad.

Now, I smoke and drink, I cut school. But when I go to school, I don't come home. Sometimes I don't listen to my parents. Well I got about five to seven more months left, and when I get out I'm going to change. I'm going to go to school and get a good job. Well, I gotta go now... peace.

-Thy

From The Beat: People don't just turn bad. It takes years and years of darkness to get at the inner part of a person's soul, no matter what kind of messed up life you were leading, you still have that good person inside of you. Maybe it took coming in here to help him make himself heard again. That's the good news, you don't have to actually change, you just have to get back in touch with the real you, and let him guide you in your life!

My Life is Not a Dice Game

Yes I'm doing time by myself, and yes my parents try to blame themselves. But I tell them all the time that I made the stupid decision so I have to take the responsibility and I always do.

Yes, my parents are worried for me, but they're not mad at me, they care about my freedom, and now I do. So when I get out I am going to stop acting like my life is a dice game, because all I keep doing is crapping out. I had enough with living the fast life so when I get out I am going to get a job and stay out of trouble.

-Trill Will

From The Beat: If you take this knowledge out of your time on lockdown, and if your family loves you like it sounds like they do, you might just turn out to have gotten more out of this so-called dice game than you ever thought. Learning from your life's mistakes is the only prize no one can ever take away from you!

Call The Judge!

If I had one phone call, I would call the judge. I would tell him everything I been through and tell him I will change. Do what I'm suppose to do, stay out of trouble, go to school and be the man, or young man that God wants me to be. Basically, I would ask him for a chance because I'm a good kid.

-Aladen

From The Beat: More than likely he would ask you how would you do all the things you've just mentioned. We say because he's probably heard that from every one who's been in his court. So how would you reply? What would be your plans to make those things possible happen? It's good to prepare yourself now for that. But also because it will give you an exact idea of what you need to do. Live up to your potential, but it's something that you must want for yourself first.

By Myself

I believe I am doing time by myself, because there's nobody doing time with me but detainees. My family ain't doin' no time because they still out there, eatin' what they want and doin' what they want. They probably worry but you the one doin' the time going through the real pain and havin' the real problems.

My family always talkin' 'bout they hurtin', but they don't understand how you feel and what you going through. So I hate when my family come in here, talkin' 'bout I'm hurtin'.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Thanks for this angry and honest answer. You always write the truth as you feel it, and that's admirable. You know what though, there's a certain kind of hurt that comes from watching someone you love suffer and knowing there's nothing you can do to help them that can just tear a person apart. We agree that no one can know how you feel, but believe them when they say that their pain is real too. Your loved ones,the ones who care enough to come visit, they've been knowing you since you were a young child, and when they look at you, they still see that suffering innocent boy. The pain is real because the love is real – can you find a way to draw some comfort from that?

My Crazy Life

I got tears in my eyes
From the pain that lies in my mind
When I think about my crazy life
Will I die from a knife?
Or a shot to the dome
Oakland is the city we roam
And we on our own in this deadly war zone
It's crazy, but it's our home
Where we true to our gang
Walk around wit a thang
Flamed out, let it hang
Yea, that's how we gang bang
And don't ask me why
'Cause I'm a tell you a lie
I just lost my mind, if you really wanna know
I can't take it, why the real gangsta's gotta go
Will I make it?
Smile now then cry
I hate it, but we live to die.

-Angelo

From The Beat: We do live to die and that is so true. On the other hand, the life we choose to live is the type of legacy we leave behind. It's unfortunate that you've chosen how your life will be, before you've even had a chance to really live your life. We won't ask you why, since what we hear will be lies. But we're sure you've been a witness to other side of that lifestyle. To the many senseless, premature murders that have left so many families struggling, some in a state of deep depression and countless broken homes. The children who've been forced to grow up in a world so cold, without the proper guidance from those who know what it's like and can relate. Or to the many talents that have been wasted and unfulfilled, because of prison and life sentences. Again, we're sure you already know and have experienced all this. It's sad though, that this is your choice.

One Phone Call To Heaven

-Marguise

From The Beat: As you can obviously see and tell, we decided not to publish your thoughts. Believe it or not, we did this looking out for your best interest. Also because The Beat is an outlet for you all who participate to share your story and educate others through your experiences. We don't see the value in continuing the cycle that has caused you to lose a loved one. The possible consequences to those actions are very severe. We understand that you maybe feeling a lot of pain already, but wouldn't you be adding to that pain? Allow yourself the opportunity to look at things from another perspective.

It's Over

My earliest memory of violence, is when I was nine years old, me and my sister got caught in a stolo and I went to the Hall for two days.

That was my first time in the hall when I got out I said I was never going to steal a car again unless a ninja was stranded somewhere then I would do my thang.

I blew up a van when I was like ten or eleven. Yeah ninja, I get down and I ain't never gon' change. Straight up, you ninjas need to step y'all game up, don't worry, I'm going to the Y for six years, so you ninjas got time to step y'all game up but when I get out I keep tellin' you ninjas, it's over.

-Darnell

From The Beat: No, you've got to step your game up young mind! The system is trying to swallow you whole, and you've been walking straight into it for too long! Is this the future you want? Lockdown and violence? Don't you deserve better than that? Don't you deserve a chance at the good things in life? Love, a family, travel, a good job, true happiness and peace? You've got this time off the streets and as bad as the Y is, it's better than Life in jail. Are you going to use this time to get your head on straight and read, learn, take classes, step your own game up, for real?

My Potna's House

My home away from home is at my potna house in Berkeley. I go over there to get away from the stupid stuff that be happening around me. When I'm over there, I do more things then I would at my house. My potna stays with his aunt. She don't ask too many questions because she runs a day care down stairs.

My potna, he is four or five years older than me. That's pretty much why I like being around him. He taught me a lot of things when I was younger, that to this day I would never forget. I look up to him still. He told me to stack my money and ever since I been stackin' since I was a teen.

-No Name

From The Beat: It's good to have someone positive to look up to, especially someone older who's already been through what you're going through. The advice he's giving you is valuable and we would guess he's giving you more advice. What are his thoughts about your current situation? Is he also supportive and vocal about you completing school, getting off probation, getting a job, etc? Is your family not that supportive of you? Or are you just able to relate more to your potna? It's good to have some other place than home where you feel secure and have a positive and supportive potna. We hope you're able to really realize how lucky you are and take advantage of that fact!

I Want To Go Home

My name is Joseph. I been in Juvenile Hall for about two weeks. This is my first time here. I came in here for something and I go back to court on Friday, and today is Tuesday. I just want to go back home to my mom and my lil brother.

At first when I was out, I didn't like being at home because my mom and lil brother had got on my nerves, just about everyday. Now I kind of missed that. I want to go home because I hate taking showers with other dudes and eating this nasty cold food. Not being able to get up and eat when I want to. And I hate asking somebody if I can go to the bathroom. I hate that. That's why when I get out I'm going to change. I can name millions more reasons I want to go home.

-Joseph

From The Beat: We hope that this is true because a lot of people say exactly what you've said. You don't have to come back and realize that it's a choice. Keep the memories that make you hate where you're at fresh, so you won't have to come back. Isn't it amazing how the little things we take for granted, are usually the things we end up missing most? Change is possible for anyone. As long as there's a good solid plan in place, along with a back up plan. Take this time to prepare yourself wisely. You can do it, believe it and make it happen!

Violence: My First Memory

Someone almost got shot in the head in a car in front of my house, but he moved aside, just in time, then hopped out the car and ran. Then the car drove off fast. And the guy came back for his car and left. I was probably eight years old when this happened. At the time I stayed home from school, because I was really really sick.

-Ryan

From The Beat: What happened next? Did you tell your mom? Were you scared? Did you think about it a lot? Did you ever wonder what the fight was about? Sometimes things like this are like tattoos on the brain, they imprint themselves on us forever and we don't even know why.

A Lot Of Homes

I got a lot of homes. I have three main girlfriends, that I could go over their house at anytime. I also have patnas like that.

-Omar

From The Beat: Out of all those homes, which one are most comfortable at? Is it at one of your girlfriends', or your patnas' house? What's the difference between them if there is one? Would you lose one of your homes if the girlfriends found out about each other? Does anyone consider your house a second home?

Where I'm At

I'm sittin' in control
Basically "The Hole"
Trying to get hella swoll
But this is getting old
I wanna go home
It ain't gon' happen
Not for a minute,
Not after what happened
But I ain't gon' speak
I ain't gotta big break
I ain't even tripping but this is hella weak
At least I got a pencil to write to The Beat
And hopefully I get a Piece of the Week

-Angelo

From The Beat: A pencil and writing are powerful tools if used in the right way. They allow you to express yourself, share your experiences and release some of the stuff that may have been held inside for a short, or long time. What's also good is it's your thoughts in your own words. You're able to reflect and see how some situations unfolded, if you're willing. A lot of people have found writing to be a way of freeing themselves, especially their minds. You articulate yourself well with your words. We hope that you continue to tap into that gift that you have. It may help and be very constructive in these times you're in.

Man, RIP

Man, Rest In Peace to my bra Kev. Man, it really hurt me when I lost you. Now I'm yo' age doing the same thing you doing bra. I just want to say that I miss you bra and love you.

Man, Rest In Peace to my cousin Mellia. Man, Mellia, we still here on the block eating for you big cousin.

Man, Rest In Peace to my cousin bra G.O. We still here bra, eating for you and Mellia. It's been hell since we loss y'all to the street. Man, we miss y'all, all y'all, and love y'all too. RIP.

-Demarea

From The Beat: Rarely do we allow a RIP List such as what you shared, but we'll make an exception because one of the topics this week was, A Phone Call To Heaven. A lot of people also share the same grief and loss that you now have. But the difference may be the way you all deal with that pain. It's good to keep those loved and lost in mind, and hopefully something positive can come from your loss. In your opinion, do you think it's wise to continue that cycle of violence and put yourself at risk of becoming a statistic to that cycle? Wouldn't your lost loved ones want more for you? We'd like to think so and hope you feel the same way.

IF I Had A Call, I'd Call Grandma

If I had a phone call to heaven, first I would call my grandma 'cause before she died, she had a stroke and she couldn't talk at all. It really hurt me 'cause she could only hear me and I really want to hear her voice again. But I would tell her to three way my boy Tommy aka Goof, and tell him what's up wit it and I miss him a lot.

-Angelo

From The Beat: We can feel your pain because of that unfortunate circumstance. Do you believe that she heard all you had to say before she passed on to a better place? Were you able to say reassuring things to give her piece of mind? Pain and loss are tricky things to deal with. They can make us act out on our emotions in one, or two ways. But we're sure you know this already. Anyways, do your actions now support what you would tell her? What do you think she would say to you? We're sincerely sorry about those losses in your life. Hopefully you're able to grieve over them and do what they would have you wanted you to do.

If I Had One More Call To Heaven

I would ask to speak to Cridy Bo, my brother, that's gone but stay in my heart. I would like to ask you brother, "Why you have to leave the town?" This aint right down here. It's all messed up down here. I would want you to know, "I love you, from the bottom of my heart." I am going to shine just how you did it. I love you brother and I'm going to keep my head up for life.

-Lil D'

From The Beat: We hope that you shining doesn't involve putting yourself in harm's way. It's good to have and keep someone close to heart that will motivate you in life. What are your plans that would help you shine? Are they in school, college, choosing a good career, the music industry? Have you been able to think about the steps you'd need to take for that to happen? Things aint right and you know that, so it's to you to do what you must and avoid the other stuff.

I'd Speak To My Brother

If I had one phone call to heaven, I would ask to speak to my brother Weezy. I would ask him, "Why bro was you moving when the bullet was by your heart? Why you just didn't fight that?" Because your little brother miss you down. I would want to say, "I love you Weezy," 'cause I didn't get to tell you this because I was in jail. But I got you in my heart and I know you in a better place. I love you Weezy.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that you didn't get a chance to tell Weezy you loved him, because of your circumstances. At times we miss out on a lot of important moments in life, that stick with us a long time, because we were incarcerated. Is there a lesson to be learned from this unfortunate incident? We hope you figure it out and won't allow yourself to miss out on any more of these, once in a lifetime, opportunities.

My Mom — It Tears Her Up

When I get locked up I don't think it affects other people that much. It might make them mad, but they know I'm going to be alright. They probably be thinking 'bout me a lot and wondering what I be doing, but I don't' think they be stressin' just cause I'm in here.

The only person that feels that way is my mother. She hates it when I put myself back in this type of situation. She still go love me no matter what but I think it tears her up sometimes when we are talking on the phone or I'm on a home visit.

-Carl

From The Beat: Wow, it sounds like your mother loves you with all her heart. Does that give you strength? In what ways does being locked up affect you yourself? Is there any upside to being in here?

Phone Call

If I had one phone call to heaven, I'll ask to talk to my ninja Meech. I'll tell Meech to call Mezzy on a three way and tell them what's been happenin'.

-Lil' Gues

From The Beat: What do you think they're response would be? Do you think that they're thoughts and feelings would still be the same considering where they are at now? Do you think that they would be alright with what's been going on, especially with you? Hopefully you're able to think about this and hear their point of view.

Phone Call To My Dad

If I had one phone call to heaven, I would call my dad. I would call my dad because he had died a long time ago and I haven't spoke to him since. I was about six years old when he had died.

So I would call him to just talk about anything because talking about anything, is better than talking about nothing. Or talking to him period. But I know one day I will get to see my dad again, when I die and go to heaven. If I had one phone call to heaven that's who I would call. I wouldn't have to think about calling someone else.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Sorry to hear about your loss. It's quite unfortunate that you lost your father at such a young age. This must have impacted you greatly. Is your mom still around for you? Is she as supportive as you think your dad would have been? How have you been able to deal with this? Has it been in a positive or a negative way? What would dad say about your current situation? Is the memory of your dad smiling, because you're taking care of business enough motivation to make that happen?

Who I Would Talk To

If I had one phone call to heaven, or should I say hell, I would ask to talk to my grandmother that I never had a chance to meet, Sandra. I would ask her what type of daughter my mom was? I want to know, so I would be able to understand her more and know why she does the things she does? When she comes to visit me, she be talking and I be wondering what makes her say the things she does. That's who I would talk to.

-Young B

From The Beat: Why would you think that your grandmother is in hell? If the answers to your questions didn't help you better understand your mom, would you be able to ask your mom yourself? Speaking to your grandmother may not be a real option, but you do have the option of asking your mom directly. Just be respectful and cautious with how you would ask her your questions. We're wondering, what type of things does she say to you? What does it make you wonder? Do they apply to you or not? Understanding is a good thing, we hope you're able to get that in the future.

I Don't Own Them

I was at my girlfriend's house and I could live there if I want to. I called it my house too. I can't say how many houses I got, because I have a lot of them. But I can't say nothing because I don't own them. So I can't say that those are mine.

-Lil' Chaky

From The Beat: If you start now and handle your responsibilities, eventually you'll be in a position of owning your own house. Isn't it a good feeling when you can say you own something? In order to be able to say that, what are some things you will have to do? Would finishing school and attending college be a start? How about getting a good paying job? Wouldn't family be able to assist you along the way? How about doing what probation asks of you, so you'll be able to get off probation? These suggestions are a start in making owning your own a reality. Believe you can do it and follow the path that will take you there.

My Home Away From Home

My home away from home is my cousin's house, 'cause everyday I'm there. I feel safe as if I'm at my house. When I'm there, I am able to get everything that I can, like my house. Everything I do at my cousin's house is the exact same thing that I would do at my regular house.

When I'm at my cousin's house, I get to talk more with his mom and I get to talk more with my little cousins. I'm able to play video games with my little cousin. 'Cause he usually would play by himself and have no fun, so I play with him and make it fun by talking a lot of mess about beating him. Even though I know he can beat me, but I make it fun by making him mad. We have hella fun when I talk smack to him playing video games.

-Abo

From The Beat: You're lucky to have such a place where you're comfortable, like you're at your real home. You're giving your little cousin memories that he won't easily forget, which is good. But we bet right now your cousin is really missing you a lot. This is also giving him other memories that he will remember. Do you think that these will be good, or bad ones? It seems like you're big part of his life, whether you realize it or not. He's looking up to you and hopefully you're able to show him the right way, only if you're willing. Would you want your little cousin to experience the things you're going through? Hopefully not! If not, then you have the opportunity to teach him a very valuable lesson. That everyone makes mistakes, but that you can learn from them and move on. That right there would be priceless and he would never forget that one.

Life Suffer

Man everyday I have to deal with this. I'm in a crowd and I feel like I'm in the wrong place. And it hurts for me to deal with it, but now I'm about to get released this week. All my nightmares will be closed. It's been like hell since I first came here, even though it's my second time. Everybody's always messing with me, and I don't know why? But as long as I got faith and God in my life.

At least I ain't goin' down in their path. I'm a true survivor to this tragic ordeal. Thank you Lord.

-Wayne

From The Beat: You speak of feeling like you're in the wrong place. However, this is your second time, and if you continue to keep coming back you may get numb to that feeling. People may be messing with you because they too feel like you don't belong. If you don't end up going down their path, then you can really say you're a true survivor. How do you avoid going down that path? What steps are you going to take to ensure that does not happen? Who else will you use as a support system? Because right now, technically, you are on that path. So get off before going any further, it may be harder down the line.

A Basketball Player For The NBA

When I grow up, I want to be a basketball player for the NBA. I don't care what team I play for, I want to be on the all star team.

I already made it to my eighth grade all star basketball team, and it's in L.A. I hope I get out by then, and I'm not like the rest of these cats, in jail for family problems.

I'm not in here for drugs because I don't do drugs. I'm not in here for what these other dudes usually be doing.

-Roy

From The Beat: You may not be in there for what other people have done, but you are in there. Hopefully you take the time to think about and figure out, why you're really in there? Your dream can be accomplished, but there are a lot of sacrifices and hard work that go with making that dream come true. As you may know, a lot of people share the same dream but not many are fortunate to make it a reality. You'll especially have a harder time if you're not out there on a consistent basis, showcasing and improving your game.

My One Phone Call To Grandpa Larry

If I had one phone call to heaven, I would call my grandpa Larry. I would tell him to three way my great grandmother Ella. I would tell them how life is, ask for advice, and tell them how much I miss them.

For my grandfather, I would have to ask him why he had to kill himself. Our family losing him made things very difficult and frustrating. It was really hard on my grandmother, uncles, aunts, and my father.

For my Ella, I would have in the world of sorrow, love, and excitement of a clueless, decent talk to her.

-Marcus

From The Beat: It must have been painful for you to share what happened to your grandfather. We are sincerely sorry that your family has had to deal with that type of loss. Were you alive and able to meet your grandfather Larry? Because that must have been a lot to deal with at the time. How did your family deal with such a tragedy? The advice you'd receive would be from those who are much older and wiser. Would you be able to take their advice and apply it to your life? How do you think they feel seeing you in the circumstances you're currently in? Would they want you to do anything different? Can you do that for them?

Money Is a Struggle

That real life right here... you go through so much.
You know what I'm saying,
We be thinking ninja be balling
But a ninja be struggling
At the same time why we get money on the block
But be going through something and don't nobody understand us
Man we want rock candy man
But don't nobody understand us.

-G

From The Beat: Imagine for a minute that you had the attention of all the people in this world that are not understanding you, that are letting you down... that don't see what you really go through. What would you say, what is it that these people need to hear? You started in this poem, when you said "But a ninja be struggling." What are the hardest parts about this struggle? Let The Beat be your megaphone. Say what you feel and we will try to help you be heard... and understood.

I Got Real Love Waiting For Me, Doing Time Alone

No, I am not doing time by myself, because my parents have to come up here and see me every week. But at the same time I am, because I'm sitting in my cell by myself every day. Unlike a lot of other people here, I got real love waiting for me, and a lot of people that really mean something

But as for as my siblings they missing me but ain't nobody forget that me because my life is too important. My incarceration affects a lot of people but ain't nobody doing this time with me.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: It's funny, you're describing jail, but you're also describing life. No matter how much love there is on the outside, no matter how many people care about us, we are still prisoners of ourselves, and when we have to do the hard stuff, we do it alone. It's sad in a way, but it also makes those rare moments when we feel connected even more precious and powerful. What are the times when you feel least alone? When you pray? When you get your visits? When you write? Those moments are the ones that help us stay human.

My Phone Call To Heaven . . .

Is to my grandpa! I never even seen, or talked to him. It's sad to see him pass away. He never set his foot down on the United States, and his dream was to come to the United States. But he died a year later, after my grandma came here in April of 2004. It was my first time seeing her in sixteen years. It was an awesome day for me. But, I'm mad and sad, to see that my grandpa never ever seen his dream. I love him and he always be in my heart.

RIP Grandpa (1931-2003).

-Wayne

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that your grandfather was not to fulfill one of his dreams. It just goes to show that we really must value and take advantage of the time we have. What are some of your dreams you'd like to see fulfilled? How do you make those dreams a reality? How about staying out of trouble, in order to spend some valuable time with your grandmother, and other family members? Does that sound like something worth while? We hope that you can see the value of time, from that unfortunate circumstance. Think good, happy thoughts and believe he's in a better place. Get to know his rich history and life through talks with your grandmother.

Lil' G

If I had one phone call I will call Li' G and I will tell him that I miss him, and how he made me go through a lot. But if he was still here, I would have a much happier life, and I know I would not think like I do now. When he died I went through stuff that I will never go through again, but my life is still not going right now.

I think I will make it in life. But I will tell him not to get out of the car and just drive away and go on about his day. That's all I got this time.

-Boy

From The Beat: It's easy to fall off track when you lose someone you care about. It's like suddenly the bottom drops out of the universe and nothing makes sense anymore. But we're glad that at the end of his piece, you say you think you will make it in life. We do too – the experience of loss didn't take you out, didn't make you cold, and one day you will find that it made you a better, wiser, more compassionate and more loving person.

Life In A Dark Hole

Life in a dark hole is where I am today -- which is called Juvenile Hall. This is a black hole because it's not the place to be. We all got family that wants us to be with them, and look now they just finish the new hall aka Baby Santa Rita. Next month, some of us are gong up here, and it is no juvy like type of shhh. You know what I'm saying.

-Lil' Boricua

From The Beat: No matter what the building is like what matters is the people. You'll still have your same counselors, your same fellow detainees, and your same support up there... Most of all, you'll still have your same self, and that is the constant that will carry you through the change. We'll see you up there!

What's Up Beat

Just want to give a holla to all my people and stay up. Do your time and don't let your time do you. Don't give up on life, they can lock us up for two to ten years but that can't stop us from loving one another and doing what we do.

kKeep your head up and holla back. Love y'all and kept lit for real.

-Awwman

From The Beat: No one can stop you from doing what you do, but what is it that you do? We don't' mean this as an accusation, we mean it for real... because there is too much to do in this world: countries you haven't seen, music you haven't heard, books you haven't read, people you haven't met, waters you haven't swum in... in other words, too much to do that you haven't done. If you keep doing what you been doing to get locked up, then they WILL have kept you down. So we repeat the question: What is it that you do?

A Phone Call To Heaven

If I had a phone call to heaven, it would be Mac Dre because I would like to know how it feels not to be on and live in peace. Instead of sideshows, clubs and stuff like that. 'Cause me, I be on like Mike Jones, forget all the bull. But I know that he in a better place. It probably be cranking though, but I'm gonna cut.

Holla at ya boy. Rest in peace to the loved ones. I'm out.

-Lil Kari

From The Beat: What do you think he'd have to say? Right now, how do you feel not being on? It's probably a little more painful because of your circumstances, right? When you're on, your problems are still there and will be there when the on wears off. Do you think it may be a little wiser, to just deal and hopefully solve the problem? Or is that not an option for you?

One Phone Call To Heaven, I'd Call My Mom

If I had one phone call to heaven, I would call my mom because I want only her to really know where I'm at. 'Cause if she don't know where I'm at, then she will worry about me everyday. Even though I'm not there but I would call her just to let her know where I'm at.

-Abo

From The Beat: What do you think her response would be to you being where you're at? What do you think she'd say to you? Would she be happy with the circumstances you've gotten yourself in? If not, how do you get yourself out of those circumstances for good? Don't you think that she's looking down on you, right now? Hopefully you can use this to motivate you to get back on track!

Rain Snow or Sleet

Life is a bee and death's her husband
Everything is a game in which no one is ever due to win.
Failure is dark
Success if bright
Never go left and always go right
Keep yo' head high
And never low
Anything is possible. You never know
I've seen many things in my life and I'm not proud
But life goes on whether I'm here or not, don't quit and don't stop
A negative mind can only rot
A positive mind is due to shine
With my hustle I'm good for my grind
Rain snow or sleet
Nothing stops my hustle I got money in the bank

-Anonymous

From The Beat: This poem soars like Icarus all the way up to the last three lines, and then bam, it falls flat to the ground. The word "grind" is right, because it grinds young people's dreams down into dust. With your talent and insight, you can't tell us you want a life of crumpled fives in your pockets, nights shivering in the cold chasing down cars, every police siren a potential one way ticket back here. We can tell by how you write that you have bigger ambitions than that. Aim for them.

A Day In the Life Of. . . .

Wake up in the morning and I think to myself,
How can I get rich how can I stack up my wealth
And is it good for my health
I'm tryna be perfect
And in the end where I end up is it gonna be worth it
Do I even deserve it I know it's illegal
But it's better than jacking, man I ain't killing no people
I ain't feeling no evil and you gotta respect it
If you don't young homie turn your jaw I'm gonna check it
I'm 'bout to wreck ninja and this train gonna go
Get a swisha from the sto' 'cause a mac' gonna blow
I'm from Oakland and I ain't afraid to stack up my grits
By serve hella knocks and spitting my hits
I got spits fresh off the record
My beat slump fresh off the keyboard
I bust thangers fresh from me thump hoard
Box chev sitting high like a megazord.

-Eugene

From The Beat: There are so many great rhymes in this piece "fresh off the keyboard" rhyming self to health to wealth and perfect to worth it... you've got daring and originality in your rhymes. But then when you get into the poem, you get caught up in trying to show how tuff you are (serving hella knocks? Turn your jaw I'ma check it?) – and that feels more like bravado. We see it all the time in these pages, the artist tries to speak, but then the language shifts and the artist gets caught up in that tough-talk posing that young people seem forced to do all the time. Where does it come from? Is it because there's so many haters looking for weakness? Is it because those are the rhymes you hear on the radio? We want to hear all the ways that young Eugene is exceptional, not all the tired old phrases that sound like everyone else. You end it on a great note, too "megazord." Now THAT is something we haven't seen in a rhyme before!

Long Day In The Hall

What it is Beat? Today I'm not feeling it.
I been doing hella much today, not in a bad way, but a good way.
Today I woke up at two in the morning to work. Then I went back to my room.
Then came out at four-thirty to get ready to go to court.
Then I worked some more. Then I called my woman at six in the morning to wake her up
to get ready for school.
Well anyways, I'm sleepy!

-Hb

From The Beat: Sounds like you've had quite a long day. Do you think that this is something that you carry forth into the real world/streets? Working and taking care of your responsibilities would help keep your time occupied and out of trouble. It may also help you out financially. It may be worth seriously thinking about and looking into.

Tears

No Matter what race, we all cry the same way.

-Cry, cry, cry

From The Beat: Indeed we do.

Jail Is My Home

My home away from home would be jail.

I do however, feel that I always come to jail because is not safe on the streets, because of all the gangs, turfs and dangerous people out there... with all the shootings and stabbings, murders, and rapes it is just not safe on the streets anymore like when I was young, thank you Beat.

-Charles

From The Beat: It's not safe out there, is it? But the thing is, have you ever noticed how all the bad stuff happens between ten at night and seven in the morning? Which is a time when we should all be home anyway. It's too bad there aren't more places young people can go where it's safe for them to hang out at night. But that means no drinking or drugs either – do you think if those places existed, then too many people would think they were square, and so no one would go? Tell us your thoughts...

Spring Thoughts

When I think about spring
I think about my pockets
It's soon to be shroomin' in the hood
And the police can't stop it.
I dare anybody to try to knock it
I'm gon' get the cannon
So get out the the window
And it ain't gon' be no jammin'
It's cheese in the air
I'm really tryna land it
These haters really can't stand it
But I'm gotta smash to my respect
It's safe to say I demand it.

-Dt

From The Beat: Demand what? You're demanding block respect, violence, a chance to fight over crumbs, and end up back in here? Stooopid. Come on! You deserve better than that. Why don't you demand what the American Dream owes you: An education, safe streets, a good job. Work and fight for your rights. As long as you just chase street cheese you're a foot soldier in a war that's already been lost.

I Miss My Dawgs

I must keep it real
And man I miss times we would shine
You would keep me on your side
You would teach me how to ride
And now you gone but you is in the best home
An it's crazy 'cause we was in the same position
And that's when you change position
Shhh I never change
And I miss ya and it's strange
But I never forget, y'all you know who you be
Danny! Miesha, Wezzy,
It the life that got me, what's really real
Is you my ninja's up there
And I hope you feelin' me.
If I ain't got time to speak the history
I miss you all
....and I know you're missing me.

-Awwman

From The Beat: So many people you've already lost/is this game worth the price it cost?/The parts of your piece we had to cut/You know why and you know what/Cause we know you're tryin' to open your eyes /And move on with life so you can rise/Change your ways and end the violence/Don't let the streets turn your song to silence.

One Call, Talk To Mac Dre!

If I called Mac Dre we will he hang out hella of time. And dance thizz face and go dumb whenever we go. I always want to meet him but damn he's dead.

Rest in peace Mac Dre.

But I'm tell you this I'm hella big on him 'cause a he's soldier of all ghetto crowd! He can dance, rap, crazy shhh going on and I'm sure he smoke grapes too! And if I meet him I will hella go out and go to clubs, messing with girls and smoking grapes and dance all night long.

Me and Mac Dre has same kind of personality and I can dance, fight, smoke, go dumb whatever, I wanted.

But I still want to know if he still rapping if he still alive. I love his videos it's hella ghetto. I learned from him and I learned myself to defend myself. I am willing to fight whoever challenges, me but I ain't going be down I will be still standing and fight and win.

-Birdman

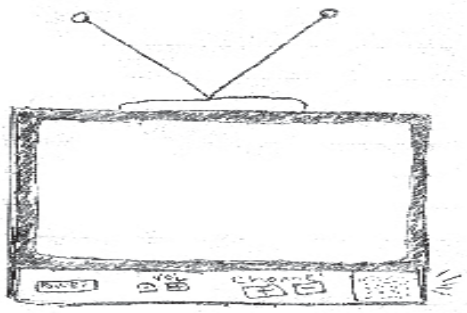
From The Beat: Mac Dre was an artist (like you) a talent (like you) a gifted performer (like you). But here the lesson stops – his genius is an inspiration, but his lifestyle was a tragedy, and all that BS about messing with girls, fighting, smoking, going dumb is part of what killed him. He was too good for it, but it's too late for him now. Not for you, so what are you going to do about it?

Together

I fell too hard
Now I'm split in two
All because of loving you
You made me do things I'd never
Just to be around you
Now I feel like such a fool
You said you loved me Ha what a laugh
Since we are through you admit it
I was a piece of a...
Those days are long in the past
Now I'm put back together

-Skittles

From The Beat: It sounds like whoever this guy was he wasn't worth your time. As young women do, you compromised your standards and let him persuade you into doing things you didn't feel comfortable doing—it's a situation all too common, and we as women need to realize that anyone who tries to make us do things we don't want to really doesn't love us. It sounds like you learned that lesson, and that means that you're ahead of a lot of others. We're glad you put yourself back together and we hope you know that you deserve someone who will show you respect and love.



Advice For People Coming Up to Camp

What's up Beat? It's yo' homie Lil' Indio, from the 'town (Oakland), well today is March 27, and I got four more days to get my HV. Oh yeah, I'm at camp for y'all who is reading this, like I said, four more days until I go home and get some real food instead of this county food and spent some time with my family too.

Oh to the ones that's comin' up here, don't RUN, cause this shhh is hella easy, so just pimp this shhh up here, so you could get out fast. When y'all come up, don't talk much so you won't get write-ups and don't play around. Well that's all for now so I'm out. Yo' lil homie

-Indio

From The Beat: As always, good lookin' out. We hope that other people coming up gain from your suggestions, and that you remember all that positive thinking when you get your freedom!

If I Had One Phone Call To Above

The one person I would call is my Boo "Mac One." I would ask him who killed him, if he miss me and still love me. I would ask him why he chose to put women down and be a pimp. Not that I'm mad at my boo for pimping 'cause to me he's my idol.

-Gina

From The Beat: What makes him your idol if you say he put women down and made his living off of their bodies? We know that love is complicated and that maybe you knew him in a different way, but we hope you think a little about the life that he lead and how things could have been different for him. We're sorry he died in such a violent way, and we bet if he could talk to you he would say get the hell out of the lifestyle that keeps you and many others down!

My Play Cousin's Home

A place I would call home that is not really my home would probably be my play cousin's house. I would choose them because we've been friends for a good few years but we have connected like family looked out and took care of each other like family. These really good friends happens to be the place where I would probably call a second home.

-J

From The Beat: Good for you for having such special friends. What makes them so wonderful?

Innocent and Young

First of all I would tell the family's sorry for their lost.

I've too have lost people I loved and that too strong and they get through it.

Then I would talk to the shooter and be like what the hell is wrong with you shooting some little ass kids then I would slap both of them in the back of the head and say y'all messed up.

-Allen

From The Beat: If it was only that easy. We all heal/mourn differently, and as for speaking to the shooters, well... we get where you are coming from.

Home

My home away from home is my baby momma's house because I stay being over. I eat there, I sleep there and I'm coo' wit' her whole family and they all love me over there.

-Allen

From The Beat: Well don't lose a good thing. How do they feel about you being incarcerated? What must you do to succeed in the free world?

Interview

i got an
interview
to go to
los angeles
i'm just waiting
to go

-Dennis

From The Beat: It's a blessing. Don't let the waiting start you to stressing. Stay chill, and the time will ... pass, at last.

My Home Is My Job

My home away from is my job where I work in Emeryville. And that my job is my home because I have grown a good relationship with everybody there I worked with and I'm very comfortable with everyone there. We all respect each other and help each other, and have fun while we work.

-Working Man

From The Beat: Tell us what kind of job you have? Give us the details. Hope it's waiting for you when you get out!

I'm Tired

Nowadays these so called homeboys wanna sound hella hard in The Beat. Since they don't got MySpace to internet bang they use The Beat as a sub.

-Hollow T.

From The Beat: Quit pointing fingers over who is hard and who isn't. Allow people in The Beat to tell their story. As for MySpace, that's a whole other story. Can't compare the

That One Call

I'll pick up that phone and call my brother Monster and jus ask for advice. Just pour my heart out and let him know everything that I never had a chance to get off my chest. Let him know that I miss him and life ain't the same without him. And end it with an I love you. I love you mah ninja.

-Hollow T.

From The Beat: Can't imagine losing a loved one like a brother. Can you tell us more about Monster? Can you tell us more about what advice you are seeking

My Home

My home away form how is undescriptive
sometimes it's disruptive.
My home away from home is a place to chill.
Sometimes my home is a place to chill.
Sometimes my home is scary to be around but, I
love it. I aint tripping on the real.
The block where my other home is, it's crazy.
There's buildings next to building on top of
building and everything.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Thanks for taking on this topic, take us inside your home. Tell us why it's chill at times and hectic the other times?

One Phone Call Full Of Questions

My dogs would get my phone call like my bra Ron-Ron, Paco, or my sis Mellia. I would ask a million and one questions. I would ask them what's on the other side.

I would talk to my grandparents too and apologize for my behavior. I would ask Mac Dre why he performed in Kansas.

I would ask Ron-Ron why these dudes be out here acting fake.

But anyway to my family and potnas who gone, RIP, and watch over me forever.

-P-Stank

From The Beat: AS most of us who have lost loved ones, of course we want to hear their voice(s), with the idea of asking lots of questions. It sure would be emotional, wouldn't?

I remember the days when the hood wasn't hot

One Phone Call

If I had one phone call I would call my brother Daniel and ask him what happened the night he died and why did he have to go? Also I would ask him how he was doing and if he seen our other brother that passed our brother Tony, and I would ask Daniel to tell what also happened to Tony as well himself.

-Allen

From The Beat: We bet you want answers. We bet you want to connect to your brothers, what can you do to live a life free of the system in the names of your brothers?

The Block Is My Home Away From Home

My home away from home is the block because that is the only place I feel safe. I can do whatever I want and not have to watch my back. I can smoke, drink, and snort coke without anybody saying anything. Because it is my block so what I say go.

-Skarface

From The Beat: The block where all the hate and violence jumps off is the place you feel safest? What's wrong with this picture? Plus, we hate to break the news that your block is everybody's block, you don't own it!

After All This Time...

After all this time of being in and out the hall, I'm starting to see how life works. Now, I'm trying to do good.
So to everybody who coming to the hall, start thinking and don't come to the hall.

-Mark

From The Beat: Those are wise words from a young man such as yourself. Isn't it amazing how we learn from our mistakes? But now that you've learned what not to do, how do you go about doing it? What are the things that you will need to cut out and start doing in your life? Spend some time to figure all this out and be prepared with a back up plan. This time may actually be worth while, and you thought your mom was doing it out of spite. Make it happen!

Mentality Crazy Got Paranoid Off My Dreams

So I look back at life and it ain't what it seems
Weighing packages of dope on triple beams
Posted on the block with the rest of my team
I remember the days when the hood wasn't hot
Now all I know is to sell rocks and evade all the cops
I wish that I didn't but I admit that I did it
It's nothing to me I'm just rockin' my fitted
So you can hate it or love it, it really don't matter
I'm gonna be on the block climbing the latter
I'm on top of my game plus I stay on my toes
So check me out all y'all boy anything goes.

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat:How and why did you get yourself caught up in the fast life? Can you step out of the life? What will it take on your part? By the way, we hate to inform you you have fallen off the ladder and we wouldn't call jail being on the top of your game, it's time to change your ways youngsta!

Those Who Don't Care

I ain't writing to The Beat if Judge Kay said you have to write to The Beat every week. I'll be on it, but this shhh ain't doing shhh for me it ain't getting me a release and it ain't getting me an education or scholarship to college.

I know you gon' have something hella smart to say back but he y it' s life you live love and move on.

I got great goals beyond these four walls damn if I could only think back to the first time, man I would have thought twice. I'm tired of sitting here in this county pink looking at these people acting hella weak. I'm tired of this shhh, I'm ready to kick rocks.

Anyways I'm gonna let ya go. You don't care and I'm tired of hearing my problems. Bye.

-Mohawk Thang

From The Beat: That's fine. Do what pleases you. No need for a response, other than we wish you the best, and maybe one day you will write us to let us know what's cookin'.

Young, Innocent Bystanders to Violence

I hear that the drive by shootings were in Hayward, that's also where I live. So I think it is wrong to shoot to two little girls because how could you shoot a four year old but can't do it to a grown man or something.

-Mathew

From The Beat: Whoa...violence is wrong no matter who it's directed at, though we agree that it's especially heartbreaking when it affects an innocent child. Looking at the bigger picture though—killing anyone, grown or not, sends ripples through a whole community, and ideally we would hope to erase all violence from our communities.

I Was About Five Years Old

...when I witnessed my first actual violence. It was about two o'clock on December 24th, and the older males that use to hang out in front of my house was shootin' dice.

I was too young to know the actual violence that came out of it, but they was kickin' it like it was cool. But I seen how fast you could get ya life took.

-Trauma

From The Beat: Five years old is young to have such a hard lesson. How do you think it effected you? Do you think it made you think violence was a normal way to be, or did it make you more cautious?

Get My Record Sealed

Man this Kev up here in this unit and hella bored up here. The county 'bout to move to that new thang up the hill but I ain't tryin' to even touch that thang. But if this group home hurry up and come get me I won't have to go up there.

But I'm going to go and pimp that, because I ain't tryin' to come back, and I also want to get my record sealed. So I'm cool, and since there's so many opportunities out there, my mom want me to go and finish the program successful.

-Kev

From The Beat: Good luck, and write to us once you start figuring out how to take advantage of those opportunities out there. Who knows, once you get it together out there, you might be able to light the way for others!

Better Life

How I feel right now that I am locked up, well it hurts me to see myself just going through pain. Plus, all of my family is now so ashamed, and so mad of me but as I try to go to sleep at night, I think of all my family at night. So now I am almost home. I need to go from here, I don't need to see myself as now, as in an older age, as an adult in jail so I get on my knees every night and pray to my Father every night to let me see a good and better life.

-Lolita

From The Beat: We're glad that you gain strength through your spirituality and we encourage you to keep praying if it helps you, but we hope that you use that strength to fight for the life you want—big life changes don't fall from the sky, we have to work for them. We think you have the strength to do it and we stand behind you all the way.

My Phone Call To Heaven

If I had one call to heaven, I would call my brah, Davon, and tell him how I'm living out here in these streets and how I'm out here with these fine females!

Then I'd call my brah, Jaja, and tell how his big brah is bustin' down fences and living large. Then I would ask Uncle Weezy who killed him. And then I'd tell my ninjas to go and terrorize these streets where we live — one time from me, and for you, a dime piece. And all the young bucks will know that Lil' Mainey is back! That is it from Mainey. Chop it up with you young bucks and females, fast like Comcast.

-Lil' Mainey

From The Beat: As you see, we cut "bo" from your name. We refuse to advertise that (Ro)bo(tussin) y'all be stealing, dealing and (we're not saying you personally, but there it is). As for your call to heaven: terrorizing the street will only get you buried six feet deep faster than broadband! There's nothing heavenly in any of this, except that if you keep living like this, fasheezy, you'll get killed like your Uncle Weezy. If you can't wake up to a higher mind, just don't bother to write for The Beat next time.

Grandma

The person I would like to meet is my grandma because I never met her and I wanted to see how she sound.

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: Does that mean that you would like to hear her voice and the things she would tell you? Sometimes the stories that our elders tell can mean a lot and we can learn big things about where we come from, among other things.

Haiku: Horns and Halo's

You gotta get
Real fast, like life bleedin', gon'
Ghost, with essence, sin

Yep devil playground
Life as an immortal yep
Young demon child, die

Horns halos day old
We still die, in Hell we burn
In that fire we churn

Twilight zone, shadow
Livin' dead boy half sleep wake
Down like midnight day

God, Satan don't play
Tha nevalands flare, spirit
Cool and I don't care

I see me power
Life lived hour after hour
Stretch to the heavens

I'm deep in hell's lands
Took angel girl to party
On off Bacardi

Smokin' like Marley
I gig in the under world

Sleep with the main pearl

Inferno lit blunt
I got purp' in these lungs, yep
Aries juice filled cup

In the gangsta attack
What's up
Got greens on my plate

It's all town business
I really got a sickness
Just cause I'm thizzin'

-Demon Child Die When I'm High

From The Beat: You took the standard Japanese Haiku form and added your own little twist to it – by throwing in rhymes. Original and surprising as always. But man, what's with all the glorifying of the b.s. Thizz/drug/purp trouble that puts out so many of the bright young lights of our country? Why waste one of the oldest and most powerful poetic forms on a lifestyle that keeps so many people down? It's like being given precious gold and melting it down for bullets. Don't you have something better to do with your gold?

My Vacation Home

My home away from home is when I smoke a blunt and sit back and chill. I be able to get away from all the dumb shhh that be going on. And think about shhh. It helps me get my thoughts together. So that's like my vacation and home away from home.

-Ray-ray

From The Beat: Self-medicating for stress may lead to short-term success, but once you're in the system — a legal solution will work best. In here, too! Try some combination of exercise, writing and silent meditation (like count your breaths till all thought fades — it may sound square but it feels cool when you get to where serenity stays).

If I Had A Phone Call

If I had a phone call to heaven, I would call my grandma and talk to her. Before she died, she was like my mama.

She was like my mama, she was my ninja. She basically laced a ninja up since I was little. RIP Granny.

-Ray-ray

From The Beat: Why do we not doubt your granny got this call and is smiling up in heaven? But you know she wants you to change your life and get right with the law. Look into your heart, 'cause it's an inside job.

That Ain't Me!

What up Beat, this Lil' No Name from D unit.

I am back again, my probation is trying to play me, she ain't trying to let me go home.

I go to school every day and I get good grades in school this my last year in school. I only need twelve more credits to pass high school, but my probation officers don't care. I am trying to go to college and be the man I know that I can be.

I am not trying to end up like my cousin, in jail for life. That ain't me. I hope I be out the next time y'all come here.

One love to y'all. Everybody, keep y'all head up and when y'all get out, stay out for good.

-Lil' No Name

From The Beat: The determination really shows in this piece. Even though you hit this setback of getting sent here again, you're still talking about going to college and learning from your cousin's mistakes, and sending out messages of hope to the rest of the detainees ... see, they can't keep your spirit down! Write to us to let us know what happens.

To Miss In Love

Dear Mama,

I want to come home I miss you so much and my room because everything that I see now is that it is not like at home so when you come and see me every Wednesday it makes me feel like I know that I have someone on the outs, but it don't make me feel that my mama should give half of her time to see her child locked up. But one day I will know.

I have court soon and in I might go home on EM. But I know if not it's because for one my mama don't have a house phone. She needs to get one, because if she don't get one I will be in juvenile hall for awhile.

And when I first got lock up I was in Orange County for three and a half weeks and I had to be on the transfer by bus to come to my Alameda County and on that day, March 1, I got to talk to my mother and the next day I seen her in court.

-Lolita

From The Beat: You're obviously ready to get out of juvie. Are you also ready to be at home? Those are two different things—we think that being ready to go home means being ready to take responsibility for your life and start living differently. Your mom coming every week means that she cares and shows you support—that's a lucky thing.

Hella Mad, Part One!

I'm in here, hella mad 'cause hella mail been
coming lately and I haven't had none.
Hopefully I get some today late.
If I do, I should have hella mail, 'cause she said
she been sent it like last week,
so it should come or I'm gone be hella mad.
Other than that, I been cool, so holla at this
boy fast though!

-Lil Rome

From The Beat: We hope you get that mail soon – but in the meantime, young Hella Mad, why don't you write a little about what letters mean to you, about what it's like depending on them for contact with the outside world, about whose letters you wait for the most, about what you think makes for a good letter?

I'm Lookin' Clean

When the females see me, they say, "Look at lil' brah"
Fresh Js on my feet, I'm lookin' clean, brah
Lil' cousin fitted, Girbeau jeaned up
See me on the street—I'm all G'd up
From my head to my feet, I'm always fresh
100% pimpin', ain't no time to rest
I like when ninjas hate—that mean I'm on they mind
See these Red Monkeys—these is one of a kind
Large hoodie, Bathin' Apes on my feet
Young Ant on the track and in The Beat

-Young Ant LCRS

From The Beat: Fitted for life, right, Young Ant? Somehow you always look fitted, even in your dark green golf shirt and khaki pants—the Ranch summertime uniform. Maybe it's because you're always in a happy mood that you always look so fresh, then again if it's about lookin' good, you better straighten up and fly right!

Just Staying Quiet At The Ranch

Hello, Beat,

This me, Young R, and yes, I haven't been writing The Beat, but I am today because I just want to, hear me?

I'm good, just staying cool and keeping my head up. I'm about to be out, but anyways, I hope y'all write more good things for The Beat.

-Lil' R LCRS

From The Beat: Maybe you're mentally preparing to go back home and just want to stay to yourself for now, Lil' R. We understand. You've written some wild stories and wonderful, heart-felt poetry for The Beat over the months you've been inside. We're always here for you.

Checking In, Checking Out

This be that boy, H, just checking in.

First, I just wanted to pick somebody brain today. I been up her for over fourteen months, and when I was supposed to make my level, they hit me with twelve hours. I already had twenty-two and some people who owed me some hours gave them to me, so I had thirty hours. I got forty-two hours in two weeks and made my level, but I'm here to tell you that shhh wasn't as simple as it sound. I had to do hard labor work for the forty-two hours, but I did it, so finally I'm moving in the program on my way up out of here, to get caught in the rapture. Got skin like a animal—hard and tough.

-H LCRS

From The Beat: Mr. Potrero Hill, congratulations on getting your hours and doing so well in your program! How do you guys down there at the Ranch share your hours and give them to each other? We know you're way ready to go home. You write that you have skin that's hard and tough, but you have a way tender heart and an amazing mind, that should work on seeing beyond all the "misery" and the animals in the "zoo." Ok, PH, we hope you step up huge when you're free again, meaning succeed in the free world!

Books

I never really like reading, but over here I'm reading books I like. It's strange, but I like reading certain books.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: You know we're going to ask you, what books have you been reading down at the Ranch? Which are your favorites? What have you learned from them? Do you think you'll continue to read, once you're home again?

Them Talkers

Don't you hate shhh talkers? All they do is talk. I look at it as a waste of time--don't even bother. But I do say something to make them happy. All they want is fame or attention, so I give it to them. All I gotta say is, "Save people's time. Run up or shut up!"

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Why even worry about the talkers? What a waste of energy. Mind your own business, focus on your needs, and if someone has a problem with you, hopefully they are mature enough to tell you in a respectful way, free of drama.

Long Way

Yeah, I been in here for a long time thinking and knowing what had happened. About my reason, I know it was wrong what I did, but I need to get the heck out of here. I can handle it 'cause it 'cause I'm one of the finest.

I'm going to keep my head up, but I miss my fam. I love my fam. They mean so much to me. I never realized how much they meant to me until now I am in here sitting and thinking worried what's going to happen to me. Am I ever going to be able to see my real friends and whole fam? Am I going to be normal again? Can I go home where I belong?

-Lil' D

From The Beat: You say you can handle it here, but why should you want to handle it? Wouldn't it be better to take the energy it requires you to "handle it" and put it into some life changes that would keep you out of here? We're not sure if you can handle that... We believe you when you say you love your family which means the world to you, but how have you demonstrated that love? By doing things that you selfishly wanted to do and not thinking about the pain you are putting them through? By answering to your boys before you answer to your family? By being down for the block before you're down for home? How is that showing them you love them? We have no doubt that you will be able to go home where you belong, but only you can answer the question whether you will be able to stay home where you belong... We hope so.

Killing Time

I've been up in the Ranch for about one month and two weeks. My time ran by fast—writing letters helped a lot. Also, being with my homies, getting visits helped too, but letters, mainly.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Glad time is moving fast for you. Staying busy is key. Writing is a wonderful way to pass the time, and to document your own thoughts too. Of course doing time with friends helps, and having those special visits. What's the plan to stay out? Are you working on a game plan as you do your time at the ranch?

Good Thing

The good thing about being here at the Ranch is it gives me time to think and see who my real friends are that write to me and stuff. Also, I'm going to graduate when I get out, so I'll be going to college early and I'm planning to work at The Beat again.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: So what are you thinking about? What are you working on? How close are you from graduating? And when should we expect you at Beat headquarters?

A Call To My Dead Father

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to my father. It's because I didn't see or speak to him about seven years.

I would ask my father how is heaven look. And I would ask my father to watch over me and be with me everywhere I go. I would tell my father that I miss him so much, and I will always remember him in my heart.

I would ask my father if he seen my grandma, grandpa, and my brother, and I would tell my father to send my love for them.

-Lovelyloto U5

From The Beat: We're sorry you've had to grow up without a father. How did he pass? How and when did your brother pass? Are you doing the things you know you should be doing that would make your father proud of you?

A Phone Call To Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to my big bra OG. I would ask him what he first thought after he knew he was no longer living physically on earth. My second question would be what he thought about the stuff that was going on it the jets and everything that we doin'. Lastly I would ask him how does It feel to know you're dead. I would tell him that I miss him and Carolyn (his mom), and that I'll see him later.

-SeySey U5

From The Beat: Would you ask him if he has any advice for you to live a long life? Would you expect him to change any of his opinions in death from how he thought when he was alive? If he wanted to change places with you, would you say yes or no?

My One Phone Call To Heaven

To my ninja Ray Diddy, man, you left fast as hell. No one even got a chance to say good-bye. You was family, not blood, but we was tight. You told me to stay out that lil' shhh, but I never listened. Now I can't get out, but I see what's coming. I keep it real just like you.

You stayed out of trouble. That's why I won't let no one, I mean no one disrespect your name. We ain't talked since 2004, that's why we talking now.

I was shocked to hear what happened. I know you still holding it down wherever you at, and I'm doing the same. You said why rep a street named for a white man. Till this day, I remember when we had our last talk. You kept it real.

I was used to you going hard on me and my brother about getting into trouble. Things changed since you been gone, you wouldn't believe it. I see your sister all the time whenever I'm on the block. I won't let nobody mess with her.

I got you bra, 'cause you was there for me. I got trial this month. Wish me good luck. I'm gonna keep it real fo' life. I'm gonna see you see you sooner or later. Love, Drew.

-Drew U2

From The Beat: Another tragic story about another young man whose life has been wasted by the ongoing street versus street violence. If you really could speak to Ray in Heaven, what do you think he would tell you about how you are living your life? Do you think the things that he thought were so important when he was living would still be what's on is mind? Or, do you think he might tell you that staying alive is the most important goal to achieve and holding on to your freedom is a close second? What would you say to him if he kept it real by telling you to get out of the game, go to school, and keep his memory alive by keeping yourself alive and free?

My Second Home

There's a place I call my second home because I really feel like I belong there sometimes. I could get very comfortable there. I do anything I would do like my own house. I help myself to everything.

This place is my guy best friend's house. His family really treats me like I'm one of their own kid. His parents let me stay over whenever I wanted to or needed to. They always brought me food and supported me. They always made sure I went and did my work. I was always able to trust my best friend and his family. And I still do.

-Denise U5

From The Beat: Do you spend more time in your own house, or in your friend's house. What do they think now that you're locked up?

A Call To My Cousin In Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to my cousin, my cousin Marchelle. The first thing I would say is, "Are you ok? I know it's a better place, but how is it?

Then I would say, "How is your little brother doing and how is the rest of my family doing? I hope when I get up there you wouldn't have forgot about me." Then I would tell her how much I miss her and everybody else miss her and her brother. Then I would talk to her forever 'cause that's all we used to do.

-Donecla U5

From The Beat: How long ago did you lose your cousin? How did she pass? What did you and she used to talk about? Do you think she would want to give you any advice about how you're living your life? Like what?

Speaking To Mom In Heaven

If had one phone call to heaven, who would ask to speak to? I would call my mom because that my main right there, feel me. She always been there when I was mad and sad. I could call for anything for real. I would ask her, "What made you do what you do," and ask her, "How you doin', an' I'll see you when I get up there.

If I had another one, I'd call my brother and ask him what happen, what made him stop, and tell him how much I miss the homies, an' stuff like that.

I'm done. I'm out.

-Lil' Kut U2

From The Beat: What did you mom do that you want to ask her about? What is it that your brother stopped that you want to ask him about? We're sorry you've lost these two very special people in your life. What do you think they would tell you about how you live your life and what changes they hope you make?

Sorry And Sad

It makes me feel sorry and sad, knowing that the two girls were young and innocent. Yes, it brings up sad memories of something I've seen. What comes to mind when reading this topic is my friend who got shot in my apartments. He was a boy. Now, I can't help prevent this violence from happening again. I would say to the family of the victims, "Keep your heads up!"

-Marcela U5

From The Beat: It's hard to keep your head up when a child is killed. We're sorry you've had to experience something so terrible as a friend getting killed in your apartments. How old was he? What are you doing to keep yourself out of this kind of horror story?

A Phone Call To Grandma

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would call my grandma who just passed away recently. It's very sad that you know you gotta see them at their funeral. You cry a lot and it's so sad.

Also for the fact that my grandma was very close to me. She took care of me. She watched me when I was a kid. She was basically there for me all my life.

Another thing is when I bring up my grandma, it just makes me sad and angry but for the fact that I will always love my grandma, not matter what. Hopefully, I'll see you soon, and hopefully, I'll talk to you. Rest In Peace Nana Rhahim.

-Super Mario U2

From The Beat: You were very lucky to have such a loving and caring grandmother in your life. And you're not so lucky now because she's no longer in your life. Why does it make you angry when you think of her? Didn't she live a full life, knowing that she had a grandson who loved her? If you could talk to her now, what kind of advice do you think she would give you. What kind of changes would she ask you to make?

Chess Game

Momma told me
I can be w'at I wanna be
Even if I try
E'rythang counts!
I do have dreams
Just like e'ryody else
Think of it as poker
Havin' to deal with da cards
That was dealt
Check it
Life is like a game of chess
Ya gotta make your next move your best
It's like God's way of putting us
Through a test
Sometimes I wanna get away
Wishing I had wings, so I can fly
But we got to face reality
And quit telling ourselves lies

-Lil' Bipp U5

From The Beat: If this is God's way of putting you through a test, are you passing or failing? What can you do to improve your chances?

Phone Call To Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would want to speak to my brother! Off top I miss ma bra to the fullest. I just think that it's really messed up how you can talk, play and joke around with someone and wake up the next morning and they just not be there.

I ain't gone lie. I ask myself and God every morning why am I here? Why can't I be with the only person I love, ma bra! Love you bra!

-Nene Baby U5

From The Beat: What happened that you woke up to find that your brother was no longer in the world? If you could talk to him, what kind of advice do you think he would be giving you about doing anything differently in your life?

Phone Call

God, I been anxious to make this overdue phone call to my mother Crystal Brown, someone I haven't talked to in over 10 years. The last time we spoke, I woke up to a puddle of blood in the kitchen. At age four, I really didn't understand what was going on.

Please believe, I will never forget what happened. The ninja that killed you left behind yo' lil' king and my lil' sis, yo' lil' princess. Can't nobody take your spot, but sometimes I feel like everybody tries to. After your death my dad made a mistake, and he been locked up since '95. So I really ain't had no parents in my life. But it ain't never made me weak. I just keep living and think about you all the time. Your lil' princess is also yo lil' twin. When I look at your pictures I think it's my sister.

But anyways, I know I'm locked up, but it's just one of the downs in my life that I'm going to look back on and not make the same mistake. I been living two lives, the thug life that got me in here, also the smart life that's going to get me out and into college. Just keep looking out for me and yo' daughter, and I'm going to make sure we live our lives to the fullest and let nothing get in the way to success.

I'ma see you, hopefully later than sooner, but you never know. Say wassup to my great grandma, and some of da homies fa me.

All I gotta say is whatever goes around comes around.

-Kee-B U6

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your mom, but the only way we can keep it real with you is by telling you that as long as you're still into the thug life, then there's no way you are living "the smart life." You may think you can balance two worlds, but we're here to tell you that it can't be done — and the fact that you're locked up should be enough for you to have figured that out on your own. You can be the smartest person in the world, but one slip-up in the "other" life you're leading, and you'll be joining a lot of other people who thought they were too smart to get caught up in the system for years at a time. If you're really as smart as you say, this will be your last "thug" behavior, so that you can be the big brother the lil' princess needs in her life.

My Home Away From Home

Man, I got mad fams, so my cousin's house is like my house. My favorite home away from home is my Tweek cousin. At da house she got basically da same stuff I got. Same food, I got half my wardrobe ova there… It's all love and I'm comfy ova there.

I just can't call a place "home" if I'm not used to da environment. Anotha reason why I got discharged from my group home, livin' in a place wit' 17 girls I'm not related to ain't a home settin' for me.

Just 'cause it's a house don't make it a home. Being in a group home is just a requirement.

-Crack Head U5

From The Beat: What worries us is that you can get so used to this environment that it begins to be like home to you. That's the worst thing that can happen, so we hope it never happens to you. A group home isn't supposed to be like your home, but only a transitional step between places like this and your real home. What makes a house a home?

One Call

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to my brother. I wonder what he would do different if he was still here. I would also ask him what was his intentions in life, his goals or dreams, etc.

RIP, A's

-Lil' Bip U5

From The Beat: How old was your brother when he passed? How old were you? What would you say if he turned the questions back on you — what are your intentions in life, your goals and reams?

My Life Thoughts

I sit in my room, thoughts running through my mind that I should not be here. I need to do something positive with my life. Females and lil'-ass kids get on my nerve. I just want to go crazy. Dis shhh ain't me.

I'm 17 and I gotta do better than this — enjoy life, do my thing, school and job. I can't be in here with lil'-ass kids acting like their shoe size.

I'm in here again. Why did I have to go out that Friday? Man, life is a trip, for real. Yeah, I bang, drink and smoke but I could do better, learn new things not repeating my life all over, help moms travel around the world, make money and stop coming in here wearing the same shhh every day. I think like an adult, like a lady making plans and looking at the big picture. This ain't me.

-Lucero U5

From The Beat: If you're "here again," then apparently you're not as bothered by being here as you claim. After all, you put yourself with these other females and "lil'-ass kids." When you're truly tired of coming here, when you truly find that this isn't you, then you'll stop doing the things you know lead here. You say "this ain't me," but as long as you "bang, drink and smoke," this will continue to be "you," and you will continue to be just another "lil-ass kid" complaining about being around other "lil-ass kids" who, like you, all say: "This isn't me!" Oh yeah, you CAN do better, and we're waiting for that to happen.

Getting Out

I'm happy because I'm about to get out on the 19th to Santa Cruz group home. I'm fit to do what I got to do to finish the program. Chea I'm out.

-Lil' Kut U2

From The Beat: Congratulations on getting out. Once you do your program, what are your plans? Will you finish school? We hope so, because that's the key to a better future.

Wait For Me, Little Sister

If I had one phone call to heaven, I would speak to my little sister. Would tell her I love her, and wait for me.

-Marcela U5

From The Beat: It should not be that an older sister should have to bury a younger sister. When did this happen? What else would you tell your sister?

Home Away From Home

My home away from home is like another house full of games and music and friends and family. It has educational information and you get paid for the work you do. You clean up the community, try to stop the violence, and conversate with yours peers. And it's a green building with a basketball gym and football field and all types of things that it has a lot of sports players.

-Ant U2

From The Beat: It sounds like this "second home" is an imaginary one, an ideal place where only good things happen. Even if no such house exists yet, the fact that you have this in your mind means it is something that you can work toward. It would be a blessing to everyone if you succeeded in creating your dream.

Going To A Group Home

Chea boom. It's yo' boy Young Chuck holding it down with my. Man, it's not looking good for yo' boy. They trying to send me to one of them group homes. I don't know why they send a ninja like me to a group home. They know I'm go get on. You know I'm go hold it down, ya heard me.

-Chuck U3

From The Beat: Why shouldn't they send a ninja like you to a group home? What kind of a ninja are you? Are "they" trying to send you to a group home, or are you sending yourself there by doing the things that give "them" power over your life? We hope you take the group home seriously so that you can gain the maturity and responsibility you lack in order to retake control of your own life.

Phoning My Grandpa In Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask for my grandpa. Why? Because I never got to meet him. So I would be wondering how would I be with his great wisdom and great advice? I wonder how would I act if I had a grandfather that was on the same page with me.

I mean, I do have a grandfather, but he's from El Salvador and he doesn't understand my life. He just would get on my case off of my room being dirty or I wasn't right in the head. (LOL) I've asked him for advice before but to tell you the truth, he's really hardheaded.

-Kris U3

From The Beat: So, you think you're Salvadorian grandfather is more hardheaded than you? If you were the grandfather and your grandson didn't clean his room, wouldn't you get on his case too?

Speaking To My Grandma In Heaven

If I had a call to Heaven, I would talk to my grandma, because she was a big person in my life. She helped my family plus my mom when my family was struggling. So I thank her for what she did in my life.

-Speedy U3

From The Beat: If you could talk to your grandma, what advice do you think she would give you for making changes in your life? Would you follow that advice? What's keep you from following it now?

A Little Advice

When you' locked up, if you' getting sent to a grouper (group home), just take it, 'cause your chances are, you're going. Lately it's better to hurry up, get your time done, 'cause sitting in court only wastes your time, 'cause once you get to your grouper, your time starts then, and then you realize you should have just hurried up and accepted it.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: Speaking from experience? Why do you think people get sent to group homes? Yes indeed a group home is way better than dead time in the hall, yet you sitting in the hall waiting may be out of your control too.

My Big Island Home Away From Home

My home away from home would be living in my own big island. Feel me, with 200 bedrooms and with 150-car garage. Each room has a shower, tub, two sinks, two toilets, and 7 by 5 foot wide mirror. Plus, each room has a king size bed and 56-inch big screen TV.

The outside of my house is going to be painted my favorite color with black outlining, you feel me. I was buying the island only if its 3,000 acres, That way, I can only put my game I'm going to hunt whenever I want.

Then I would have my family live with me. And I would have them know I didn't earn this money the wrong way. I went to college for hella years, eight to be exact. Then I would come and build a master suite and that would be for me and my dream girl.

-James U2

From The Beat: Well, we certainly approve of your plans to go to college (to study what?) so that you can get that well-paying job that lets you move into the middle class. On the other hand, why in the world would you want 200 bedrooms or a garage that can hold 150 cars? We think you'd be happier if you scaled down your dream house so that you have a real chance of achieving it. In any case, if you get this mansion up and running, we'd love to be invited...

Last Of Your Homies

Sorry for what you're going through. I been through it too.
Don't know who you can trust, or who you talking shhh.
Just keep it coo'.
You know I be by your side till I die.
You know I'm your hing dai
No matter how many people go against us
If you're down I'm down 'cause we got the guts
Thanks for everything
This Beat is dedicated to my boi Jimbo

-Chinatown Kangaroo U2

From The Beat: We're curious how you got your Beat name. What makes you a kangaroo? Do you have a pouch? How long have you known Jimbo? Is he free? What are your plans for keeping your own freedom when you get out of here?

Describe Your Home Away From Home

My home away from home would have to be one of my home girl's house. Me and our other friends would go out and do whatever we got to do and then just crash at her house, sleep in late till 12 or 2 in the afternoon. If our parents ever kick us out of the house or if we need a place to stay, we always know for a fact we can crash at her house

-Jeffrey U3

From The Beat: What do her parents say when you stay over and sleep until the afternoon? Why would your parents kick you out of the house?

My Home Away From Home

What's up Beat? How y'all doin? Me, I'm gonna keep it real wit' y'all. I'm doing hella bad because I've been running from group homes and I've been staying at my half brother's house. I call that my house away from home because it really is.

I'm hella mad right now because I'm in here and not there. It's killing me inside because I can't be there wit' my lil' bra. It's all good though. I'll be home soon. Just to let y'all know, I ain't gone stay at no punk-ass group home. Right when the group home comes to get us I'm up on they ass.

-G-M U6

From The Beat: You can promise all you want that you won't stay at a group home, but if you run, all you're doing is running back to lock-up. You say you're hella mad because you're in here right now, but you don't say who you are mad at. Didn't you give "them" all the power they need to put you here? So, we guess you're mad at yourself. And if you run and get locked up again (which is the consequence for running), you'll be able to continue to be mad at yourself. Maybe it's time to suck up some of what you don't like now in order to be able to do what you do like in the future.

Is It For Me?

Witnessing murder really opened my eyes to this street stuff. I had to really sit back and think, is this the life style I want to live? I started thinking that it was too late for me to turn my life around until I had a real talk with a close relative.

-Terrance U2

From The Beat: We can tell that you didn't finish this piece, Terrance, and that's too bad because it sounds like you could spit some knowledge that your close relative shared with you. We know that it's NEVER too late to turn your life around, but we're interested to know what your relative told you that made you see this too.

To My Family

To my mom my dad, and my family, I'm sorry that I put all this stress and sadness on you guys. I promise I will never do this again. But all I can do is right now is do my time and try to make y'all feel better. I'm sorry. And for all those I made sad, tell me, 'cause I gotta make it up to you. For my girl, I miss you as well. And since you're not family yet, you will be soon. I love y'all.

-Std U2

From The Beat: We hope your Beat name doesn't mean that you're a sexually transmitted disease... Tell us, how do you plan to make it up to those you have hurt, and who are still hurting for you? What changes do you anticipate making?

A Phone Call To Dead Homies

If I had a call to Heaven, I would like to talk to all the homies that die on the struggle. I don't know why all you had to go, but you in a better place now. I hope I see all you in Heaven one day.

-Brian U3

From The Beat: Do you think the homies that have passed "had to go," or put themselves in dangerous situations that made their deaths more likely? Do you put yourself in those kinds of situations? If they could talk to you about how you're living your life, what kind of advice do you think they would give you? Would they want to change places with you if they could? Would you want to change places with them?

Calling God

If I had one call to Heaven, I would call God and ask Him why didn't you tell me and my friend and family when was we gone die and why didn't he tell me to look up when them boys was coming that shot me. That what I thought You was for. Then I would ask Him what are you here for? You letting young people die who never tried to pick up a gun or shoot somebody before.

But I would let Him know what's going on around here. Then I would let him know what did He put us on Earth for, to die or to ride. But I would have a million and one questions for Him. Then I would ask Him to tell me the next time death comes to let me know something or get me out the way. But I wouldn't tell Him what to do. I would ask Him to just help me when it comes.

-Phillip U6

From The Beat: Why do you think God should tell you when death comes? It comes to all of us. How it comes is, in large part, up to us. If we live in violence, we're very likely to die in violence. If we live a healthy lifestyle, we're likely to live a long and healthy life. If you were able to talk to God, what questions do you think He would have for you?

Home Away from Home

My home away from home is the "Francisco Motel" or the "Crack head Motel." When I was younger and was mad or upset, I would walk down the street and stand outside the motel. Many Hispanics lived there and I befriended them. Some of them are still close friends till this day. I always felt comfortable there, the cuts "fo' real."

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: It doesn't sound like the best environment for a child. What do you think? Did hanging out there get you into any of the trouble you've encountered since you became a teenager?

My Home Away From Home

I think my second home is the 'hood. Why I feel that is my home is because I be there more then I go home. If I'm not at home, I'm there. I don't rest my head there. It makes me feel like it's home because I could enjoy myself down there. When I'm just chilling I just feel comfortable and that would be my second home.

-Jr. F U6

From The Beat: But aren't you leaving something out... which is that as long as your second home is "the 'hood," then your third home will be jail! And the more times you come back to jail, the more it will become home for you. We think it's time to make a change. What do you think?

Just One Call

If I had one phone cal to Heaven, I would only want to talk to God. Because I know once I die I'll have plenty of time to talk to everyone else. I would ask Him where me and my girlfriend would end up, and how many kids I'll have, if I have any at all. I'd wanna know how many of my family members and friends would pass while I'm alive. I'd wanna know if I'll be successful or not, where I'd live. I would and wouldn't at the same time want to know when people that I know will die. If I knew it would be good because I wouldn't take them for granted. I'd cherish every moment with them. But then I'd have a lot of sadness in me knowing the day they'll die.

-Young Uce U6

From The Beat: It sounds like you want all of God's mysterious laid out for you to see. Wouldn't that make you God? Here's our advice: instead of waiting for God to tell you when your loved ones will die so that you can cherish them before it happens, why not cherish them now? That way, you won't regret anything that might happen in God's plan.

One Call

If I had one call to make to Heaven, I would call to talk to God. I need help is what I would cry out. So people need to just pray is probably what I would hear on the other end.

I understand there is a God, but many people has the God of money on their mind. My God is me. Only I could help myself. If there's anybody else tell them to call me. During this call I would have my friend on the other line, put my baby brother on the line and see what he has to say. I would let him know how this world is treating me. He might be mad to see that I was in jail. I would let him know how every person in this world is against me but can't stop what I do. Man, he was my little soldier but I can't bring him back. All I could do if get what he would want at my age. Just to be a boss.

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: It seems like there will be a long line of people waiting to talk to God. We're not sure why you can't talk to God right now. And we bet you already know what God would be telling you about how He wants you to live your life. So, what would change if you heard Him tell you what you already know? So, you think your baby brother would admire you for "being a boss" locked behind bars? He might find that a funny definition. We do too.

One Call To Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to talk to a couple people. The first one would be my ninja Fino. Another person I would like to talk to is my Auntie. I would ask her how she doing, and why she had to have a heart attack. I would also tell her kids are doing good, and that she don't have to worry about them. The last person I would talk to is my ninja Mono. I would ask him why he had to get drunk that night and get stabbed. That's what I would write to the people in heaven.

-Yung Jokes U6

From The Beat: If you could talk to all three of these people, what would each one tell you about your life now? Would you be willing to follow any of their advice? Like what?

Calling My Mom In Heaven

If I had a phone call to Heaven, I would call my mom since she no longer lives on this world. I would tell her how my life has been changing since she left, and how hard it is without her. I would also tell her that my Auntie Angela has been there for me since she left, and that she is the mom I need for an incident like this.

Then I would three-way God to talk to him about my situation and ask for advice and to ask Him to guide me in the right direction.

-Cuba U6

From The Beat: How do you imagine God could guide you in the right direction any better than He is already guiding you. You already KNOW what the "right direction" is, so wouldn't God just tell you to follow the path you already know is the right one? If God told you, "Just do the right thing," could you follow His advice?

Dragons Fly

As the winds blow, I can feel it in my hair. I feel the scaly skin being rubbed against me. He spits fire. It burns, but I can't stop the pain. I ask God to help me, but it seems as if He doesn't' answer me. I stay strong to live long but I need some type of support.

Just to speak on innocent people being shot, stabbed, or killed is not the way we should go. I have a story of a best friend of mine was shot 47 times over a female. Me and him was walking down from a store where we was stopped by five young people. The last thing I saw was dragon fly just before shots started to ring through my friend. I hesitated, but when I pulled out my gun it was too late. My friend was on the ground in cold blood.

I called the police after I stashed my gun, but I never seen anything. They kept asking, because people was saying that I was there when everything went down. The Dragon Fly was still there after all the commotion was over. After everything was over, I went and grabbed my gun went to North Las Vegas where they was, but I couldn't find them. So all I did was take my anger out on innocent people. Please God help this Dragon stop spitting fire.

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: You should really be asking God to forgive you for hurting people that had nothing to do with your friend's death. Then you should ask Him how to live your life without picking up a gun. Do you really believe in God? If so, can you explain to us how you would justify to God destroying what He created? When you picked up that gun and headed for LV, weren't you saying that you were going to act like your own God? You say that God doesn't answer you, but how do you know? Could it be that His answer is not the answer you're looking for? Could it be that the fact that you are locked inside a cage is His answer?

I Think

I think everyone in Juvenile Hall is a key because when someone gets off, all the door open for your freedom.

-Kwes U6

From The Beat: This is somewhat mysterious, Kwes. How does one person getting out of juvenile hall open the door for all of you? Do you mean it gives you an example to go for?

Smokey

My home away from home gots to be my potna's house, 'cause every time I go there, his family makes me feel like I'm part of their family. They would feed me, let me stay there whenever I had nowhere to stay. They would give money if I ever needed. That's my home away from home!

-Smokey U6

From The Beat: Does your family make your potna feel as welcome at your house as his family makes you feel at theirs?

Why Not Biggie?

First of all, you guys didn't put Biggie as one of the people to talk to in Heaven! What the hell! Biggie was raw than Pac. Anyways, if I could talk to Biggie, I'd tell him that it's a damn shame that he got blasted. Ha ha, better him than me, that's my philosophy.

-Raph U6

From The Beat: We didn't put a lot of people down that you could ask to speak to. But what makes you think Biggie is in Heaven, anyway?

My Home Away From Home

The block because I live there and that's where I was born and that's where I be at 24/7 except when I'm in jail. So that's where my homie is always.

-Marcus

From The Beat: As long as the block is your home away from home, then you'll be spending significant periods of your life locked up. So maybe jail is your home away from home...

If I Had One a Phone Call

If I had a phone call to Heaven, the one I would call is my grandma. My grandma passed away some years ago. She was a passionate Christian, and I would like to hear form her what she thinks of my life. I know she wouldn't agree, but hearing it from her I believe would make me change.

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: We don't understand.... You mean, even knowing that your grandma would not approve of how you're living right now isn't enough to make you change unless you hear it directly from her? What kind of sense does that make? If you believe she is looking down on you, then it seems like you would want to do the things she would want you to do.

Home

My home away from home is at my lil' mama house. The reason I say this is because my girl is one of da only one who really got love for me like my family.

-Young Bud U7

From The Beat: If you have both a loving family and a loving girl, you have much more than many people have. We think you owe them more than leaving them alone to cry for you. You owe them the sacrifices it will take in order to stay with them.

Friends

Friends come and go
Some are usually hella low
Like leaving you when you in need
Leaves me here where I gotta plead
Who's there when I need to talk
When I get out I'm gonna walk
To find some new friends
Will they fall or follow their own trend

-Chowcee U2

From The Beat: Bad friends are nothing new/ Choosing well is up to you/But our advice we'll gladly lend:/You must be your own best friend!

Speaking To Grandma In Heaven

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask for my grandma and why she die in front of me. Why couldn't have one more chance to see me grow up, at least graduate middle school. That all I wanted, and let her know that I'm now here right now locked up, to please talk to Jesus for me to keep a second chance to go home and really start all over again.

Tell her how my life has been. And what I experience and how's mom doing and has she thought about me, and why she didn't come back to live with me and be there to support me and moms and my brah and my lil cousin? Or our ups and downs. Let her know to protect me and be there for me my guardian angel.

-Lucero U5

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your grandma, but at least she lived a full life. If she did put a word in for you with Jesus, what do you think He would ask in return? Can you give Him what he wants from you?

Valentine's Day

What it do Beat? Me, shhh, chillin' keepin' lit for the block, ya heard. But what's really good wit'? Damn B, Valentine's tomorrow like what, ya boy in here for Valentine Day too, I suppose to be on the block wit 'the homies and the thugs and ma lil' beezies, feel me. Ma lil' females suppose to be feeedin' the thug right now, supposed to be hittin' some shhh right now.

Then I just saw the homie. He just got the Ranch and back. I thought bra was go keep it lit and doin' it movin', Now me and bra in here like some jerks. Now you wanna know what a thug is, that's a thug, ya heard. Dreads hella long, go dumb. But damn I hope this be the first and last time I miss Valentine's Day. Ya boy gone, ya heard.

-Al Bundy U7

From The Beat: We hope you read how we corrected some of your spelling mistakes so at least someone will get something out of this nonsense!

Wanna Explode

God, please bless me wit' enough sanity to go through my stressful times
I'm finna go off, but what good is that gonna do acting like a foo' — gone earn ya two
I don't know what to do
The veins in my eyes finna explode
Off the rocky obstacles in my road
I wanna live a better life
But when is that gonna start
Whenever the D.A bark, it put dart through my heart
In my life ain't nothing sweet like a tart
It's dark like the streets which we bleed and live bitter like beets
Stanking like feets between da sheets. But nah fa really, what's the deally wit' tha Pilly
Two months later I'm sentenced to the Philly

-Robel U6

From The Beat: Do you mean that you are on your way to Glen Mills, or some other program in Philly? Maybe this is the avenue for that better life you want to live. Maybe they can teach you some skills to get through life without risking your freedom. Maybe those sweet things you've missed in your life are just around the corner.

One Phone Call

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to my grandpa. I would call him because there's a lot I have to talk to him about and I never got to conversate 'cause I was young. I would ask him how is it up there, and how many people are there. I would also have a lot more to ask. I would also tell him I'm doing good.

-Chris U7

From The Beat: What would you tell him when he asked you why you're locked up? What would you tell him when he asked you what your plans are for doing good again?

Home Away From Home

Man, what it do with the homies and thugs out there that's holdin' they blocks down to the fullest, ya heard. But shhh, I'm good, tryna do my time and get out this hole.

Damn, my home away from home is my female house and it don't matter which one 'cause all of 'em go treat ya boy Bundy the same. But the reason why it feel like home because they mother treat me like I'm their own child, buyin' me hella stuff when we go out and buyin' hella food and stuff and just spending the night at my girl house when I want to. Tell moms like, "Moms, I'm at whoop whoop house/ I'll be home tomorrow some time."

But I gotta lot of places that's like home fo' ya boy.

-Al Bundy U7

From The Beat: So, are you trying to tell us that every one of your girlfriend's mothers takes you in like a son, buys you clothes and food and "hella stuff" because you're the great Bundy... or is this just more nonsense?

Grandma Kept Me On Track

If I had one phone call to Heaven, who would I ask to speak to? I would call my grandma because when she was alive she kept me on the right track and she always made me smile. She did more for me than anybody else, gave me her last. I really loved her for that. I would ask her what should I do now, give up in life or try to be the best in whatever I do?

Young Bmack is the name. Since she left, ain't no more love in my heart, just anger and pain.

-Bmack U7

From The Beat: You're lucky to have had a grandma in your life who cared so much for you. But do you really need to talk to her directly to know how she would answer your question? We have no doubt that she would tell you never to give up (she never gave up, did she?), and to strive to be the person she always wanted you to be. We hope you don't wait for that conversation before making the changes that you know would make her proud.

One Call

If I had one phone call, I would call my mom. I would tell her I'm trying to do good, but people tend to misunderstand me and what I'm really about. Throughout my life I've had a series of unfortunate events and only a chosen few people really believe in me. I would ask her how is she doing and how is ma pops

-Leonard U7

From The Beat: So what do people misunderstand about who you are? What are you "really about?" How much did your own choices contribute to that "series of unfortunate events?" And, most important of all, do those "chosen few" have good reason to believe in you? Do you belief in yourself?

Calling My Auntie

If I had a chance to call heaven
I would call my aunt she passed away because of lung cancer
I would tell her how much I miss her
How I wanted to see her. Spend time with her
I would talk to her about my problems
And she would solve all of my problems....

-San U6

From The Beat: Nobody can solve "all" our problems. But we're interested to know which problems you think she could solve for you. We're also interested to know whether you would follow whatever advice she might give you. And what do you think that advice would be?

Hope

I hope I get out.

-DB U7

From The Beat: If you put in as much effort on the outs as you put into this piece, we wonder how long it will be before you again hand over all self-responsibility and decision-making to strangers.

My Call To Heaven

If I was to be able to talk to one of my loved ones that has passed away, it would be my great grandma from my mom's side. The reason I would talk to her would be because I heard she was loved and well respected by everybody in my country Nicaragua in a little town called Corinto. Not only for that reason though.

I would ask my great grandma why she killed my great grandpa and then killed herself. Was it because she seen my great grandpa with another lady, did she get jealous and pull the trigger? Why did she do it? That would be my question to my great grandma.

I still love her though. I love the both of them, even though I didn't get to meet them. R.I.P

-Tone Kiki U6

From The Beat: Did you grow up hearing about this terrible event in your family's life? What does your mom say about it? What does your grandma say about it? Do you think anything that your great grandpa might have done would justify this murder-suicide?

Describe Your Home Away From Home?

My home now is a concrete room with three windows and two beds, a sink and a metal toilet. My real home is like no other. I live in a house with a bunch of crazy-ass Christian Salvadorians. I love it though. I have my own room with a bed, a radio with two 15, and two big windows and a small little fridge.

I used to wake up every morning by my little cousins running around and banging on my door. Mane, those were the golden days, really. Thinking about it, I wish I can bring those times again and really take more time with my family, and even go to church with them and just be there for them like they are now for me.

-Kris U3

From The Beat: Well, Kris, these are things that you will again be able to do when you get out from under the situation you're in now. Our worry is that, while you're locked up you're willing to do anything to get back with your loving family, including making promises about how you'll change, but that when you get back into freedom, you'll fall back into those poor choices that lead here. Prove us wrong!

Coming Here Is Not What My Mom Wants From Me

Man, what 'sup with The Beat? If had one phone call to Heaven, I would call my mom because I am making a bad choice right now because coming here is not what she want me to do. If she was alive, I would spending time with her and my sister, and I would be living with my sister. She keep telling me if mom still here, I wouldn't do this stuff that I am doing now.

But I am go stop and do the right thing, and protect my family. One love. I am out

-Young Jt U3

From The Beat: Have you told yourself before that you're going to "do the right thing," the thing your mother would want you to do? Why were you not able to do it? What's going to be different this time?

Jail Not For Us— We Better Than That

What it do? It's big bra, Stub. I be home real soon. I want all y'all in the halls to do your time an' get it over with, for y'all won't have to worry about going back no more, 'cause jail not for us. Be better than that. Do it for me and the homies, 'cause we don't need y'all in jail. We sick of keep having to write letters to each other, go wherever they send you. Do the time for you can be back.

-J-Stubs LCR

From The Beat: You all are better than juvy or jail. Great advice to the young homies, J-Stubs. You sound like a wise young leader. Do the young ones listen to you on the outs, like they must inside, and just naturally come to you for advice? If so, we hope, once you're home again, that you continue to help the young homies realize they really don't want to mess up their lives, their education, their futures for whatever it is that sabotages them. Please keep talking to them.

I'm Always Welcome In My Grandmother's House

The place I call home away from my home is my grandmother's house because she has lots of snacks, big screen TV, everything I need and want. It makes me feel like home, because she told me I'm welcome any time.

-Marcela U5

From The Beat: What does your grandmother say now that you're locked up? What does she tell you about the way you're living your life?

Music

Music is the shhh for me! Music helps for everything—for good times and bad times, and almost everything.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: What kinds of music works for you? What music do you put on when you are feeling good? And when you're sad or angry? Tell us more about your musical taste and the groups/artists you admire! If you could only take ten

If I Had One Phone Call To Heaven . . .

If I had a phone call to heaven the person I'll ask to speak to is my father because I never got to see him. I never had a chance to get to know him because he died way before my mom had me.

-Gregory U5

From The Beat: This is an example of one of those piece that you could have written a whole lot more about. Two sentences are not enough for us to get a feeling for what you would say to your father, or what you would imagine that he would say to you. If you could talk to him, what kinds of things do you think he would say? Would you listen?

If I Had One Call To Heaven

If I had a phone call to heaven, I would want to speak to Bruce Lee tha Dragon, the Mac himself called Dre, and my Relly G-Mac.

I would ask Bruce Lee about how I can be stronger and a better fighter and person. I would ask Mac Dreezy what thizz it, and have him put me on about his feelings on the present movement and how to put the Mac down like himself, you feel me. And G-Mack, what up? I'd cuss him out for driving drunk without his headlights. What? Dummy! But I'd tell him that I love him, and that I'll keep pushin' till I see him. Love that. Love that.

-D-Feezy U2

From The Beat: Well, we asked who you would want to talk to in Heaven if you could only talk to one person, not three. We think a conversation with your friend G-Mack could be the most important to teach others about the dangers of drinking and driving. We hope that you, at least, have learned not to mix alcohol and driving.

SANTA CRUZ

Used To It

I am in here for my fifth time. I am used to it, already. That's why I want to get out of here. I try to do good, but somehow I find myself in trouble.

This hall is pretty kicked back, but we should work out more.

This time I am probably going to a group home, or ranch – just for getting gang dots on my face. All I ask for is for my family and friends to be looked after.

-Andrew

From The Beat: Pretty expensive set of dots. We doubt you think it was worth it. It wasn't, was it? If it was, you have some big time growing up to do.

Don't Want To Come Back

Being locked up sucks. I don't ever want to be here again. I don't want to be bad no more. I would like to stop my drinking and start going in a straight line. I want to get out and finish high school. I think kids should stay off the streets and hit the books and get some knowledge so they can do good in life and make something of themselves.

It's just that these youngsters don't know what they'll miss out on and what they are getting themselves into.

-Turning My Life Around

From The Beat: This is good advice, and we hope you'll be taking it yourself.

Home Away From Regular Home

Today I'm going to write about the place you call home away from your regular home. And that place is my block.

I see it as my second house, because I'm always there, kicking it everyday. And when I'm there with the homies, it feels good. I always have a good time, except when the cops show up. Then everybody has to run. If you don't, they make up stuff just so they can lock you up.

This is my sixth time here, and I've been here for two months now and I don't know when I'm getting out.

Well, that's it for today Beat.

-Chikito

From The Beat: You didn't run fast enough – is that it. Maybe you should check out some other home away from home. Have you considered the library?

Q-Vo

Greetings Beat. What's good with you? Well, today I'm just writing to say Q-Vo. But everything's going firme for myself, and I'm just waiting to go to court so I can enter my plea.

I've been locked up for over a year and still have some time to do. But it's all good. Because I'm gonna handle my tiempo and I'm gonna be back on the streets where I belong. But until then I'm just going to focus on my task at hand, which would be doing my time. Alrato!

-Jesse

From The Beat: Yes, but doing your time could mean a lot of things. How about doing your time by reading yourself into a good future. There are good books all around you. And you could ask your teachers for suggestions. Do your time in a way that serves your future. Educate yourself.

Farewell

Oh farewell dear streets of mine. How I miss thee.
I will never feel the same way about any other thing.
I love you so much. And you love me.
You're my favorite thing in the whole world, besides my pet rat, Alexis.
He is good. I miss him so much I want to cry.
It feels like my heart is broken.
Sometimes I wake up and think I see my rat Alexis.

-Gaimen

From The Beat: Golly, you've got us all teared up too. Pardon us while we disappear for a good cry, round yonder corner, up the street, where ever you shall go again. Right.

A Phone Call To God

If I had one phone call to the afterlife, it would be to God, because He's the only one who could understand me when I have a problem. He will always forgive me for the poor choices I make. That's why I would go to the Big Man above. I could always talk to Him about my problems. And He will always help me out with them.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Don't you ever wonder if God is scratching His head a bit and saying, OK already – when is that young man going to learn what's really up, and what's right and what's not?

In The Days. . .

In the days of our father, when our people would hunger for freedom, and they were forced to work 'til they bled to the bone, and when they hungered for a better future, and felt like life was meaningless – they never gave up. They looked to our father for the answers. They stayed strong and they realized the answer was each other, was unity. That would make the ones that made them suffer bleed to the bone.

-Ismael

From the Beat: We're with you right up 'til the end. But we wonder if vengeance is such a good idea. Think it through.

One Phone Call

Well, if I had one phone call, I would call my girlfriend. I would tell her that I love her, and that I will be out soon, and for her to keep her head up. And I'd tell her that I'm sorry I won't be there when our baby is born, because I have to be locked up until my 18th birthday. Well, I will be out when I get out. I'd tell her I loved her. Well, that's what I would say.

-Jordan

From The Beat: Well said Jordan. We can't add a thing, except to wish you all well.

My Step-dad Was My Everything

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to my dead step-dad because he was my everything. He was the only father I had when I needed one.

And also I would ask my cousin, Greegy, "Why did you smoke coke and then get behind the wheel?" My cousin was a good impression on me. He helped me grow up to be a real person.

If I could really talk to them, I would just be so upset and probably do something bad that they would not approve of...

-Amanda

From The Beat: It's too bad these people are no longer physically in your life, Amanda, but they still remain a part of your life. So we hope you read that last sentence again and ask yourself what sense it makes for you to do things they wouldn't approve of and which will hurt you more than any target of your anger.

Was It Suicide Or Homicide?

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would want to speak to my Uncle Johnny, because he passed away by getting shot, and my aunt, who was his wife, was a suspect. My Aunt Maria, she told my family he shot hisself. The bullet wound was in his stomach. So what I don't get is, if he was going to commit suicide, why would he shoot hisself in the stomach?

And my uncle don't believe in suicide. He love life. He was a OG back in the day style. My aunt always cheated on him, and did drugs, so that makes you think. There own kids, a drama.

Well, my aunt got arrested, then got out, but became committed in the mental institution, then got out from there.

-Nessa

From The Beat: We can't speculate on what really happened between your Aunt Maria and your Uncle Johnny because we only know what you've been told. But however it happened, it's no one should have to die that way (although maybe it was his karma for being "OG back in the day"). Have you spoken to your aunt since she got out of the institution? Is she really mentally ill?

Why?

Why my life?
Why my family?
Why no love?
Why no peace?
Why no dreams?
Why no hope?
Why so much pain?
Why all this shhh?
Why this rehab?
Why me? All me?

-Marie

From The Beat: We see a strong connection between "why this rehab" and the answers to the first eight questions before that one. Is it possible that your drug use has made all those other problems worse?

My Uncle David

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would talk to my Uncle David, because he hung hisself. I would ask him why he hung himself. I would also ask him what he was going through at the time, and what he was thinking, and how he felt at the time. I'll tell him I miss him, and I love him, and I need him now.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: When did this terrible thing happen? Were you close to your uncle? What do you miss the most about him?

Another Chance To Speak To My Grandmother

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would talk to my grandmother who just passed on one year and a month ago. She was close to my heart when she was here. I would tell her about the things that I'm going through, and what can I do because she always had the right thing to say to me. I would ask her to say hi to others I lost, and I would also tell her to tell God I'm working on myself, to be on my way.

-Baybii

From The Beat: What would you tell her if she asked you, "How are you working on yourself to be on your way?"

One Phone Call To Heaven

I would like to call my grandpa. I would like to ask him what was he like? And did he love his job as a P.O.? And what is it like in Heaven?

And I would like to talk to my grandpa about my problems, and let him know that I'm doing bad. I would ask him for some advice, and to let me know what I should do in life, and what should I do to make a change? And show me the right path to a positive start, and not end up in the wrong, or somewhere I shouldn't be, like his kids or as my father who's in prison, and who's been there for three years. I wouldn't want to end up like that. So that's what I would ask him.

And I would also want to ask my other grandpa, how is he? And I would tell him that I miss him and love him, and wish he could be home with my grandma, 'cause without him, she wouldn't be the person that she is. But I'm going to end this, so I'm out, Beaters.

-Sarah

From The Beat: We appreciate that you want your grandpa to tell you what to do to change your life to the better. But can't you imagine him speaking to you? Can't you imagine at least some of the things he might tell you? Do you think he would tell you that you are doing the right or the wrong thing by dealing with your addiction right now? We think he'd be proud of you for that. What else would he tell you?

Save The Best For Last

Well, this is my last Beat. I feel like Weezy—zoom, gone. See ya, peace!
Drop one finger.

-LaDonna

From The Beat: We can't say we're sorry to see you go, but we can say we're going to miss you. Good luck. (You can still write to The Beat. We'd love to read how you're doing.)

Falling For Love

I fall in love too fast
I'm so confused
I don't know what to do anymore
I'm in love

-Terri

From The Beat: People can get addicted to that falling in love rush just like any other drug. So be very careful what you label love.

The Princess At Juvy

When did juvy become my home?
If only it wasn't my home
Why did they treat me like the princess I am?
I got everything I wanted
Plus more
Would I've kept going back if they didn't treat me like the real princess I am?
Real food, free phone calls, new everything
I had it all
I was being treated like the princess I am
Where to start?
How to end?
It was a freaky vacation
That was my home
I was treated like the princess I am
Even my boyfriend was there
We ran the place
I am the princess of juvy

-Malibu Beach Barbie

From the Beat: Who can ever say whether we'd have turned out altogether differently if this or that element had been different? You can only speculate on what might have been, but you can do something about what will

Discurso De La Calle

Por supuesto que quiero estar alejado de la calle cuando salga de aqui porque yo fui arrebatado de las calles. Creo que todos ustedes lo saben. Aqui me estan dando la oportunidad de retirarme del barrio.

Lo que les puedo decir del discurso es que espero lograr lo que quiero. Lo que quiero es nunca volver a la calle para siempre.

Lo que me ha dado la calle sólo han sido puros problemas y nada mas que eso. Lo que les puedo decir a todos los jovenes es que la calle no deja nada bueno más que problemas. Yo creo que hoy es el momento de escribir sobre la calle para que sean publicada para todos aquellos que quieran escuchar.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tomes en serio esta oportunidad que te estan dando para que puedas reconstruir tu vida. ¿Ahora que has analizado lo que deja o no deja la calle, cambiara esto tu actitud conforme a la calle? ¿Como? ¿Como te ayudará esta experiencia a cambiar? ¿Has decidido dejar la calle o nomas estas dando solo el consejo? Esperamos que realmente uses este tiempo para hacer de ti una persona mejor que tome mejores decisiones en la vida.

A Discourse From The Street

Of course I want to be away from the streets when I get out of here because I was captivated by the streets. I believe that all of you know this. Here, they are giving me the opportunity to retire from the 'hood.

What I can tell y'all about the discourse is that I hope I accomplish what I want. What I want is to never come back to the streets ever.

What the streets have only given me are pure problems and nothing more than that. What I can tell all the juveniles is the streets don't leave anything good except more problems.

I believe that this is the moment to write about the streets so that they may be published for all those who would like to listen.

-Denis U4

From The Beat: We hope that you take this opportunity that they are giving you seriously so you can rebuild your life. Now that you have analyzed what the streets leave and don't leave behind, how will this change your relationship to the street? How will this experience help you change? Have you decided to leave the streets, or are you just giving words of advice? We hope that you truly use this time to make of yourself a better person who makes better decisions in life.

Mis Primeros Recuerdos De Violencia

Pues para empezar a mí me dicen el Payaso y mi primer acto de violenvia fue en la calle con las pandillas. Mi primer acto de violencia fue cuando andaba caminando y tenía tensión porque unos rivales me estaban rifando y me les deje ir a putasos.

From The Beat: ¿Que tal si te hubieran lastimado hasta quedar bien perjudicado? Parece que tu tubistes que ver en este acto de violencia. Estar en pandilla no lo es todo. Es una destrucción total. No destruyas tu propia vida en las pandillas. Hay otras cosas en que enfocarse mas que estar en pandillas.

My First Memories Of Violence

Well, to begin with, they call me "Payaso" and my first act of violence was in the street with gangs. My first act of violence was when I was walking and I had tension because some rivals were throwing up their gang signs and I left them beat up.

-Payaso

From The Beat: What if they would have injured you to the point that your life was in danger? Being in a gang is not the best thing in the world. It is a complete destruction. Don't destroy your own life by being in a gang. There are other things to focus your attention on than being in gangs.

Estar En La Cárcel

Para mí estar en la cárcel es una experiencia que jamás voy a olvidar, pero a la vez, es un tiempo para reflecionar y pensar hacia el futuro. Yo en mi persona voy a estudiar, trabajar, abandonar la calle y mis malas gavillas para ser una perosna de bien para mi familia.

Para mí quedar en una silla de ruedas sería morir porque despues de tener mis piernas o mis brazos y perderla por andar en las calles o en pandillas, eso nunca me lo perdonara.

La última vez que me senti bien fue cuando sali de una cárcel la primera vez. Pense que nunca iba a volver, pero desgraciadamente tuve un problema el cual no merecía que me trajeran aqui. La suerte no me acompaña y aqui estoy de nuevo.

From The Beat: Que bien que tomes de esa forma el estar aqui encarcelado. ¿Te ha servido estar aqui para reflecionar sobre las cosas que has hecho? ¿Cuales han sido tus conclusiones? Esperamos que esto te ayude demaciado a cambiar tu forma de ser, y te ayude a dirijirte a un mejor camino que te faborezca a ti y a todos tus seres queridos.

Being In Jail

For me, being in jail is an experience that I will never forget, but at the same time, it is a time to reflect and think towards the future. What I am going to do with myself is, I'm going to study, work, abandon the streets, and the bad people I hang with so I can be a good person for my family.

For me, being in a wheelchair would be like dying because after having my legs and my arms and then to lose them for being out on the streets or in gangs, I will never be able to forgive myself.

The last time that I felt good was when I got out of a jail for the first time. I thought that I never was going to return, but unfortunately, I had a problem for which I didn't deserve to be brought to this place. Good luck does not follow me and here I am once again.

-Edward U7

From The Beat: It's very good that you're taking being locked up the way that you are. Has being locked up in here helped you to reflect on the things that you have done? What have your conclusions been? We hope you that this helps you tremendously to change the way you are, and it helps you to direct yourself to a better path that is favorable for you and all your loved ones.

La Última Vez Que Me Senti Bien

La última vez que me sentia realmente bien fue cuando pensaba que tenía todo bajo control. Ahora me he dado cuenta que no era verdad.

La última vez fue cuando estaba junto de mi jefita y mis hermanos, pero eso no importa porque siempre estan en mi corazón.

From The Beat: No todo lo que tenemos es para siempre. Deberías de buscar la manera como pasarla un poco más con la gente que realmente merecen tu tiempo. Manten esto siempre en mente: "Uno no sabe lo que tiene hasta que lo pierde."

The Last Time That I Felt Good

The last time that I truly felt good was when I thought I had everything under control. Now I have realized that it was not the truth.

The last time was when I was with my mother and my brothers, but that's not important because they're always in my heart.

-Francisco U7

From The Beat: Not everything that we have is forever. You should find the way to spend a little bit more time with the people who truly deserve your time. Always keep this in mind: "One doesn't know what one has until it's gone."

Marlon Y Miguel Escribieron Esta Historia

Yo sali de mi paiz con la intención de llegar a Estados Unidos. Fueron unas fronteras las que tuve que cruzar y fue muy dificil para nosotros porque sufríamos de hambre y muchísimo frío.

Parecíamos que ibamos a morir conjelados, aunque Mexico es muy duro de cruzar, los cruzamos con mucho orgullo y mucho entisiasmo. Sino fueran por la ayuda que nos brindaron la gente de Mexico, nos hubieramos muertos al llegar a la frontera. Tube que cruzar un desierto que era muy grande lo cual tuve que caminar unos días y noches con los pies heridos. Fue muy duro para mí porque estuve un mes en la casa sin salir a la calle.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho lo que pasaron al venir aqui. La verdad que ese camino es bien largo, cansado, estresando, y muy peligroso. Se nota atravez de tu escritura que sufrieron demaciado al cruzar a este lugar. Como podemos ver, vemos que no el efuerzo no sirvio de mucho porque llegaron a terminar en este lugar. Esperamos que si les lleguan a dar otra oportunidad, que la disfrutes demaciado. Por lo menos aprendistes que las cosas que se obtienen muy duro, se tienen que estimar de la misma manera como se consiguieron.

Marlon And Miguel Wrote This Piece

I left my country with the intention of coming to the United States. I had to cross some borders and it was very difficult for us because we suffered from hunger and extreme cold.

It looked like we were going to die frozen solid. Even though Mexico is very hard to cross, we crossed it with lots of joy and lots of enthusiasm. If it weren't for the help that the people of Mexico extended to us, we would have died upon arriving at the border. I had to cross a desert that was very big, which I had to walk for some days and nights with my injured feet. It was very hard for me because I was at home for a month without going out to the street.

-Marlon Y Miguel U4

From The Beat: We deeply regret what y'all had to go through to come to this country. The truth is, the road is very large, tiring, stressful, and very dangerous. We can tell based on your piece that you guys suffered a lot to cross over to this place. We can also see that all your efforts didn't amount to much because y'all ended up coming to this place. We hope that if they end up giving y'all another opportunity, you guys enjoy it tremendously. At the very least, you learned that things that one has to work hard to obtain, have to be valued just as hard as it took to obtain it.

PAUL JAY REED

We're so glad to inform you that this next writer is finally out. After spending many years locked up all over Texas, Paul Jay Reed is out and in the process of finding his niche in the free world. His writing hasn't changed, though. He's still the thought provoking, self-empowering, Beat Within inspiring person he's always been. Just wait to you get a load of his latest poem, "Melanin," where he mainly speaks about his struggles as a Black man, but to make it more universal, as just a man, regardless of race, color, or creed. Each stanza is a different struggle, and each line details each struggle. This is brilliant writing at its finest. He's staying with his sister now, and expressed how he's doing the masculine stuff around the house like fixing things and setting up machinery she probably wouldn't be able to do by herself. This is a must read and we're so happy he's keeping in contact with us. Hopefully, this relationship of pen and paper doesn't stop because he's out now. Let's make a pact. No matter what happens in your life of freedom, you try to let us know what's going on because we really value your words and experiences...

Melanin

I sleep in America's gutters; I am swept away
By the morning shift
What others abandon, I call home; their trash are
My treasures
My treasures are their trash.
Their dreams are my nightmares my nightmares are
The substance of their dreams.
They walk by me each day
Pitying me
Fearing me
Despising me
Their pities turn into pennies in my palms
Their fears form the foundation of their jails
They despise me. O' how they despise me!

I wear name brand clothes
My shirt is Julian, though torn and stained
My pants are Ellis, though faded and too big
My shoes are Adams, though the soles are worn
A twenty year old Kango covers my kinky dome
I found a London Fog this morning in an old heap
I am well clad
I am well adorned
I am expensively dressed
I wear the best they have thrown away
Me and my clothes have been discarded.
My shirt and pants
My hat and coat
Me.

I have served this country in war and peace
I have offered my body a living sacrifice
I have worn the eagle's emblem
Pledged my alliance
Sworn to protect and serve
Stood at attention
Saluted my superiors
Shot upon orders
And with pride in my heart,
Loyalty in my veins, I returned...
The same as I was before I left here...
An outcast.

I have labored in the workforce
I do what they say I am qualified to do
What only the descendents of slaves can do
What my ancestors did for free, I do for a small fee:
I am the janitor who mops and buffs the floors,
Cleans restrooms, and washes windows;
I cut and manicure lawns; I wash
Cars and pump gas; I've bagged
Groceries and for a small tip, carried them to the car;
I bust tables and wash dishes,
I've painted houses and loaded trucks...
I've worked my fingers to the bone
And in the end, I've accumulated
Nothing.

I've known many women.
I have loved them, hated them, used and
Abused them, lied to them, left them,
Hurt them, returned to them.
I've made love to them, slept with them,
Befriended and betrayed them, I've
Held them, pushed them away
Women: beautiful, ugly, short, tall,
Fat and skinny I've known them all
Black, White, Hispanic, Asian.
What I have done to them, they have done to me
And, each morning, I wake up...
Alone.

I am a Christian. I think.
I was baptized as a boy, drank
Welch's grape juice from tiny cups and ate stale crackers
On ever first Sunday evening. I've sung
In the choir and stood as an usher.
Shouted "Amen" to things I didn't understand
Went to Sunday school, BTU and Vocational
Bible School, I've sat through, slept through
Long, boring sermons.
I've dropped my hard earned cash into wicker baskets;
And when I've looked at Angelo's picture of Jesus' Supper,
I realize that not one nigger was invited to sup
With the Master and, once again, I feel...
Left out.

I am Black.
They say it's because of a pigment called Melanin.
Melanos-Greek word for Black.
Nigger-Latin word for Black
Negro-Spanish word for Black
Negger-German word for Black
English has some words for Black too:
Jiggabu, coon
Sambo, darkie
Shine,
Tar baby,
Just a few American words to describe what I am...
Black.

They say I drink too much wine
They think I drink for pleasure...
I drink for medical reasons
It's good medicine for my rheumatism,
Helps with insomnia,
Cures my colds;
Good for my halitosis
It's good mouthwash
I wash my mouth with it every morning.
In the summer it keeps me cool;
It's my antifreeze in the winter.
But to them, I'm just a...
Drunk.

I have been to prison
Stayed in the dark dungeons of desperate despair
Caged like a savage animal
Fed like an impounded dog,
Worked as a slave,
Beaten, gassed, and chained, was
Sneered at, mocked,
And marked for life.
My mind bears the marks
Of psychological scars
Open sores that fester but never heal, and
When released, like a caged animal, I am....
Lost.

I am literate.
It surprises them to know I've read them:
Frost, Browning, Shakespeare, Whorton, Chopin.
I've made love to Petronius' widow
Shopped at Updike's A and P, walked Whelty's worn out path
Swam with Whitman, danced with Dickinson,
Traveled with Swift.
I've eaten grapes with Steinbeck,
And Faulkner sounded furious when
He heard me chatting by the sea
With old man Hemmingway.
These are priceless treasures to the elite
But I am Black and for me they are...
Worthless.

I've encountered Hughes and discovered
That America was never America for me
Dunbar whispered to me
The secret song that the caged bird sings,
Madhubuti taught me how to
Recognize my brothas
Reading McCall makes me wanna holla
I'm Black and Proud! With Brother James
Now is the time to lift up my heart and sing
With Alice Walker
Because they understand how it feels
To be victim's of...
Hatred.

I am a Black Warrior.
I've braved life's toughest battles
I've fought dragons in societies forgotten dungeons
I've stared fear in the eye unblinkingly
I've scaled a mountain of dung and
Declared myself King of the Hill
I've wallowed in the quicksand of hatred
Without being sucked under
They've thrown me in the murky waters of tribulation
But couldn't extinguish my hope
I've survived drugs, alcohol, prison,
Divorce, parole, hunger, homelessness, and
Unemployment. And I will survive because I am...
Black!!!

Silent Tears

Chapter One 1996

Huddled next to each other against the wall, they listened. They held each other close and shed silent tears, as the yelling continued. "They're my damn kids and I'll raise them any way I want to." The girl was really too young to fully understand what was happening, but even at the young age of three, she understood the anger and hatred in the voices of the ones she loved. The boy was older and he understood more of what was going on. Not only could he hear the horrible anger in the voices, he understood that the fighting was over his sister and him. This understanding made the fight all the more terrifying to the boy.

The horror of the fight woke them and brought them from their shared room at the end of the hall. This was nothing new to them; it had happened before, yet every time it occurred, it was just as bad for them as it was the first time. They heard footsteps in the hallway and turned. Their grandmother was making her way towards them, with tears of her own in her eyes. She extended her hands towards her grandchildren. They both rose and clasped their hands with their grandmother, grateful for the presence of a comforting adult. Wordlessly, she led the two children back to her bedroom, opposite the kids' room. The kids scrambled up onto their grandmother's bed while she closed the door behind herself. She sat down on the bed and held her two grandchildren close to her, stroking their hair and whispering reassurance to them. The comfort provided soothed the children and eventually the tears stopped flowing. Through the closed door, they could still hear the screaming that brought them from their beds. Now, just a mere echo of its previous intensity, their grandmother's condolences helped diminish the horror of the fight the two children were just so recently subjected to.

The children's mother and aunt continued to fight into the night, outside the sanctuary of the grandmother's room, but inside the closet door, the children became less and less aware of it, as the whispered words of comfort and love continued to sooth both kids. Their minds drifted away from the yelling and they started to go back to the sleep the fighting had so rudely awakened them from.

They all slept in the king-sized bed comfortably the rest of the night. When they woke the next morning, everything seemed as nothing had happened the previous night. With their mom off to work early, Grandma and Aunty prepared breakfast and got the boy ready for school. They boy left for school, while the girl stayed home to play dollies.

LILY

Chapter Two

"But I don't wanna do this, Mrs. White!"

"Kyle," she responded, "You need to learn this to advance to the next grade. Don't you want to go on to the second grade?"

"I hate math. It sucks!" the boy said, stubbornly,

"Well, you need to know it. As long as you're in my class, you're going to do your work."

"It's my damn work, and I don't have to do it if I don't really want to," the boy exploded at his teacher.

The teacher's round face reddened with anger, and she pointed towards the classroom door. She took a deep breath before speaking to the boy again.

"Kyle, I think you need a break, some time to cool off. Obviously something is upsetting you, and I think it's a good idea for you to try to figure all this out before you come back to my class, okay?"

The boy said nothing, just crossed his arms and looked at his desk.

"Mr. De Vera? Will you watch the class while I escort this young man to the office?" Without waiting for an answer, she grabbed Kyle by the fabric at his shoulder and hauled him out of her class into the hallway. He followed aquiescently. He'd been through all this before, and it was nothing new to him.

When they reached the office, Rose, the secretary, shook her head and sighed. "Kyle, you know the drill. Take a seat in one of those chairs." Rose was a short, slightly chubby Hispanic lady, with curly black hair. She was a friend of sorts. She kept Kyle company when he had to wait in the office, and she brought him his lunch when he was confined to a chair in the waiting room.

Kyle sat in a chair at the far wall and let out a sigh of his own. Rose was right, he did know the drill. He would sit in one of the chairs until the principal, Mr. Morales, made time to see him. He could be here 'til the end of the day sometimes, which could become very irritating to an adult, let alone a seven-year-old boy.

"Kyle." The deep voice brought his head up and his eyes open. He had been nodding off, he realized. Mr. Morales was a big man, round and tall, with graying hair and a clean-shaven face. He used to intimidate the boy terribly, but despite the principal's association with trouble, Kyle had learned to like the man. He had a good heart and talked to the boy as if he was a friend, not a child. He put a hand on Kyle's shoulder and ushered him into his office.

"Have a seat, Kyle." The principal pointed to a chair opposite his big leather computer chair. The boy sat. "Now..." He stopped and seemed to consider something for a moment. "Now..." he started again. "We have had this talk many times, and it doesn't seem to help, seem to get through to you. I don't know... I don't know how to help you myself, and I've tried everything I know. Punishment just seems to anger you more, embitter you more. I have to do something for you, though, so I have decided to place you in the care of one of our school therapists. You'll meet her twice a week, one-on-one, and once in a group of other children, for a total of three times a week. Her name is Lily and she's a very nice lady. She'll help you deal with your anger issues, and anything else you want to talk about."

"I don't have any anger issues!" Kyle retorted hotly.

"But, Kyle, you do, and I hope you take advantage of the help she can provide you. You are a smart, intelligent kid, with a lot of potential. I don't know what your home life is like, but I know you didn't learn that language and those actions here."

The boy lowered his head and his face burned with shame, as he recalled the fight from the night before. "They're my damn kids and I'll raise them any damn way I want to!" He remembered the fighting and yelling, and was suddenly angry and rebellious.

"You don't know what happens at my house and I WON'T talk to this lady!" The boy raised his voice and his face was no longer red with shame, but with anger.

"Kyle, I'm sorry if I have offended you or upset you, but I am really just trying to help you."

"I don't want any of your stupid help. Why can't you people just LEAVE ME ALONE?"

"I can't do that, Kyle, because I care for you and I want you to succeed."

This set the boy back; he hadn't expected the principal to say that. "You can wait in the office for Lily to come for you. Please try to talk to her; she only wants to help, too." They both stood and Mr. Morales walked him to the door of his office and closed the door behind him.

Slumped in the office chair, the boy waited for this Lily lady to show up. 12:00 came and went, and no one showed up. At about 12:20, Rose got up and asked, "Are you hungry, hon?"

"Yeah, Rose," the boy replied.

continued on next page

MITCHELL ***There is something truly extraordinary about this autobiographical "book-in-progress" by Mitchell, a young man who has just left the maximum unit of Santa Clara juvenile hall to do his time in the state-run CYA. We have read many other efforts to "write a book" by Beat writers, but most follow the same general formula of crime and punishment, love and lust, drunken parties and cop chases. This is something entirely different, a truly insightful and penetrating look deep inside the soul of a troubled child. It is both devastatingly sad and surprisingly hopeful. And it has that essential quality of a "Best Seller" — it makes you want to turn the pages and read more. With Mitchell's sensitive heart, analytical mind and incredible literary skills, we have no doubt that the CYA experience that lies ahead of him will become the basis of future chapters that can open windows into a world most have never experienced. While the chapters presented here end on a mysterious note, teasing us to believe the child is harboring some darkly-held secrets, we know those secrets will be revealed at the time this wonderful writer and beautiful human being feels ready to reveal them. In the meantime, like all fans of their favorite writers, we await those future chapters (from inside the imprisoning walls of the YA) with eager anticipation.***

MITCHELL (CONT.)

continued from previous page

"All right. I'll be right back with your lunch."

"Thanks, Rose."

She returned a couple of minutes later with a lunch tray for the boy. The tray contained a corndog, some Tater Tots, mixed vegetables, which the boy never ate, and chocolate milk. He'd taken only a few bites, when a lady, dressed in a Navy blue skirt with a matching jacket, came into the office. She had tight brown curls and green eyes. She looked over at the boy and said, "You must be Kyle. My name is Lily and I'd like to talk to you."

"I know," the boy said.

"Why don't you bring your lunch into my office, and we can talk while you eat?"

Kyle picked up his tray without saying anything and followed Lily out of the office. Her office was at the far side of the school where the fourth and fifth grade classrooms were. It was a small room with a window and shelf of toys at the left wall, a desk at the wall directly ahead of them, and a table in the middle of the room. The office was most likely a janitor's closet before it was a counselor's office. Some encouraging posters hung on the walls with sayings like, "Only you can decide your future." Against the right wall there were some white plastic chairs stacked.

Lily went over to the stack and pulled one off the top and set it at the table for the boy. She brought her computer chair from her desk and sat down opposite him. Kyle resumed eating his lunch and Lily crossed her legs and folded her hands in her lap. She watched him eat, which the boy found annoying, but decided he was in enough trouble already, and didn't say anything. When he had finished his lunch, she got the trashcan from beside her desk and the boy tossed his tray.

"So, Kyle, what did you do to get you here today?"

"Nothing."

"Okay, so tell me why you think you're here."

"'Cause my teacher's mean."

"What did she do?"

So Kyle proceeded to tell his side of the story. Of course Mrs. White's encouragements turned to things like, "What? Are you too stupid to do your work?" and he only cussed at her 'cause she was being mean to him first. Lily, having expected him to rationalize his actions, had already talked to the principal and his teacher.

"I've spoken with both Mrs. White and Mr. Morales, and they told me something really different from what you just told me, Kyle. Mrs. White also told me you are usually a good student and do well on your schoolwork. So why didn't you want to do any work today?"

The boy shrugged. "I'm tired," he stated dispassionately.

"Why are you tired?"

"I woke up last night."

"What woke you up?"

"I... my... I had a bad dream." He lowered his face and started to twiddle this thumbs.

"Would you like to tell me about your dream?"

Another shrug.

"Why don't you go ahead and tell me about it? Maybe it'll tell us something about why you're so tired and angry today."

"It..." he paused, "was about my two best friends who were fighting."

"What were they fighting about?"

"About...what we should do for recess. And I just wanted them to stop, 'cause I like them both, and it made me sad to see them so mad at each other, like they hated each other, and they didn't want to be friends anymore, and sometimes I think I hate them for fighting so much, but I really don't, I really love... like them as friends." This came out in one long breath, and though she couldn't see his face, Lily was pretty sure if she could see his eyes, she would see tears in them.

"It's okay, Kyle, slow down and take it easy. I know it hurts to see two people you like fight with each other. But remember that I am here to help you and you can talk about it if you want to."

"Sometimes I think that if I wasn't around, they wouldn't fight no more. I just want them to be happy, to like each other again." His eyes were still downcast, staring at his lap.

"Kyle, look at me" The boy whipped his sleeve across his face and slowly raised his head. "Don't ever think that they don't want you around. They may fight each other, but that doesn't mean they don't like you anymore. They are your friends, and they do want you around. If you're leaving for any reason because you think you did anything, it would probably just make them fight even more, okay?"

No answer.

"Okay, Kyle?" A nod from the boy who had again lowered his gaze to his twiddling thumbs.

"Now I think we've talked enough for now. You seem tired and a little upset, so now we'll call it quits, okay?" Another nod and the boy finally looked up on his own.

Lily walked the boy back to the main office and took him into Mr. Morales' office. They sat in chairs opposite the big principal.

"I'd definitely like to work more with Kyle," she gestured with her right hand toward the boy. "At this point, though, I don't think it would be therapeutic to inform his parents of his behavior in class today." Kyle gave a surprised glance up at Lily and then to the principal. The principal nodded his consent. "I will, however, be taking him to Mrs. White's class to apologize to his teacher, and after that, he can hang out in my office for the rest of the day."

"Thank you, Lillian," Mr. Morales said, and then dismissed them. He patted the boy on the shoulder on the way out.

CAR RIDE
Chapter Three

At the end of the day, when all the paperwork was done, Lily walked out to her car. She opened the door and got in, closed the door behind herself, and stuck the key into the ignition. She sat back in her seat without starting the engine.

She sat there, thinking of the various possibilities of Kyle's situation. Based on her experience, she knew that this type of behavior went much deeper than what appeared on the surface, with many possible underlying reasons for such behavior.

She'd dealt with many cases of children acting out, and one of the many reasons may be neglect of the child. A lot of times, when children are neglected, they seek attention in any way they can. Many times this attention seeking manifests itself in a negative behavior, such as acting rebellious and hostile towards authority figures. Or, at times, neglect can cause children to seek attention through verbal and sometimes physical violence with peers and even adults.

On other occasions, acting out can be caused by simple cases of hyperactivity. Cases in which the child is cared for and loved, and the home life is stable and secure, but the child is just hyper, acting out because he just can't sit still. Lilly didn't believe this to be the case in Kyle's situation, however. For one, the boy remained very still and besides the twiddling of this thumbs, displayed no restlessness at all. And, two, being hyperactive didn't, as far as she knew, make children cry.

The most common cause for a child to act out, however, is due to some type of abuse in the home. Whether it be sexual, physical, mental or emotional, abuse can cause children to act out, because they don't know how to deal with what is going on at home and in their heads. The abuse distorts their reality and they begin to have trouble distinguishing reality from fantasy. This creates a need for them to interact negatively and constantly test people.

Lily believed that this last situation was the cause of the problems that Kyle was experiencing. She, of course, couldn't be sure, but based on her knowledge and experiences, believed there was some kind of abuse occurring in the boy's home life. The boy's behavior in her office suggested there was shame involved in whatever was going on. The lowered head and twitching thumbs, the tears and unwillingness to answer verbally, were all symptoms of shame. They made the situation much deeper than the "friends fighting" story he gave her. It was a very troubling situation. The story was obviously full of half-truths, and a reflection of an actual situation and the true situation involved embarrassment and

continued on next page

continued from previous page

shame for the boy. This, in itself, causes another problem.

To be able to help the boy, Lily had to know the problem and have the boy talk about his problems with her. Broaching the subject could be dangerous; the boy may close up and become angry with her for insinuating that there was a problem at home. The shame would come into play and make the boy resentful to anyone who came too close to the truth for his comfort. She could lose his trust and never have the chance to win it back again. Of course, leaving the issue under the table altogether had its dangers, as well. If she never found out about a real problem at the home and something did happen to the child, Lily would feel responsible — maybe not legally responsible, but definitely personally and professionally. Kyle was her kid and she couldn't fail him. She knew something was wrong, deep down; she knew it and she had to do something. With a long, tired sigh, Lily sat up in the seat and turned the key in the ignition. She pulled out of the parking lot and headed home.

Lilly pulled up to a red stoplight and turned down her radio. Controversial thoughts jumped around her head and she couldn't decide on the right course of action in this situation. There was so much to lose. Something inside her head was screaming, "Wrong! Wrong!" She knew something was amiss, but not what, and that was the most troubling.

Her kid was hurting and she wasn't sure of how to help him. She never thought of the children she worked with as "clients," she always thought of them as her kids. Even when she had just met them, they immediately became one of her kids. She liked to think that her kids thought of her, not as a therapist, but as a friend, an adult that didn't scold them or yell at them, but encouraged and talked to them. She hoped they saw her as a helpful friend and not as an adult authority figure.

A horn behind her tore her away from her thoughts. She looked up and saw that the light had turned green. Proceeding through the intersection, she left her radio low and returned to her thoughts. "Maybe, if I wasn't around, they wouldn't fight as much." The boy had said this and it was one of the more frightening things he had told her. The fact that the boy was wondering if life for his parents would be better if he wasn't around made this situation urgent. There's a possibility that Kyle may try to run away or something even worse, to try to ease the tension and anger between two people that he cared for. This fact worried Lily above all else. The violence at home made the boy feel that he was the cause of it all. They fought around him and that affected the boy in a way they probably couldn't even guess at.

Though Kyle had told her a story consisting of two friends fighting, Lily knew that wasn't the case. Children often used proxies to stand in for other people or things. Instead of facing an undesirable reality, children often use substitutes, such as in Kyle's case. The boy most likely substituted two fictional friends for two family members. Kids, and even adults, often use proxies when trying to avoid taking responsibility for their actions, as well. They shift the blame to others or outside factors so they seem innocent, but, as it is in this case, the proxies are often transparent and easily discernable.

It was these factors that pushed Lily to make a decision in the boy's case quickly. She needed to take action, but she also had to make sure that it was the right action. Making the wrong choice could essentially be just as bad as remaining undecided and taking no action at all. It would all come down to how the child reacted to her questioning.

Well, that wasn't entirely true. She could bypass the child completely and go directly to the parents and question them. Of course, this also presented problems. In going directly to the parents, she could threaten any relative safety the child had. If there was, in fact, physical violence occurring, then the parents would suspect where Lily got her suspicions and eventually come to the conclusion that the boy had given her this information. This would most likely anger the parents and bring unwarranted pain to the child. Or, after she confronted the parents, they may tell the boy of Lily's questioning, and the boy, in his shame, would take offense and close up to Lily, no longer trusting her, because, one, she went behind his back, and two, she was bringing up things he would rather leave in the shadows. Of course, she

MITCHELL (CONT.)

would definitely risk his trust for his safety, but there was always the possibility the parents would react badly to her questioning, before she could do anything to help.

Another option had presented itself. She now had three ways she could approach this situation, and none of them were ideal. She was a little surprised to see that she was pulling into her driveway. While lost in thought, she had unconsciously made her way home. She sighed, turned off the engine, and listened to the exhaust ting. Another option, and still no closer to a decision. Lily shook her head and got out of her car.

THE WALK
Chapter Four

"Kyle?"

"Yeah, Mom?"

"Get your sister's stroller and put Duffy in the front yard. We're gonna go for a walk."

"Okay!" Kyle walked through the house to the family room and to the glass door to the backyard. He reached behind the curtain, pulled the board out of the door track, and then unlocked the door. He pulled it open and called, "Duffy! Duffy!"

A big black lab came around the left corner of the house and padded up to the door, and the boy patted his head. He grabbed the big dog's collar and led him through the house to the front lawn. There was an eight-foot chain link fence surrounding the yard, so the boy left the dog and went back into the house. He went straight down the hall and into the last room on the right. It was painted sky blue, and there was a stroller in the closet. He wheeled the stroller out to the front yard and waited. Eventually his mom came out of the house, holding his sister, Katherine's chubby hand.

"Have them back before it gets too dark, Jamie!" their grandma's voice called from down the hallway.

"Yes, Mom!" the boy's mother replied, as she rolled her eyes.

"Are you ready?" she asked her son and daughter.

"Yeah, Mommy!"

It was late afternoon after dinner, and the sun hung low in the sky. It was late spring and the weather was beautiful. The evening was warm and there was a slight breeze. The four of them set out — Katherine in the stroller, Mom pushing the stroller, and son and dog on either side of the stroller.

They walked through the gate in the fence and went down the driveway, turning left on the sidewalk. They walked past the neighbor's house and started down the block. Kyle looked forward to these walks like nothing else. Mom, daughter, son and dog walking, sometimes talking, sometimes saying nothing, but always enjoying themselves and each other's company. The boy revels in this time with his three companions. He can pretend that it's only the four of them. No one else exists for the boy. He tunes everything else out — cars going by, planes overhead, and other people walking by. Only Mom, sister and dog exist, and that's the way the boy likes it.

Nothing is wrong, when they go on their walks. No one fights between them or yells, no one screams and cries. There are no problems at school, no Mrs. White or Mr. Morales, no prying counselors. They take the first turn on their block and walk past the "Tiny Girl's" house. His mom's friends lived there and their three daughters were Kyle's friends on long summer days. This side of the block was short and had only two houses, so they reached the next corner quickly. They turned it and were now walking parallel to the street.

It was a calm evening and everyone was feeling mellow. They walked along in silence, except for Katherine's innocent questions about the sky and grass, which their mom answered lovingly. They walked along the block and came upon a house with another family on its porch. The children were playing with a pet rabbit. The children's mother stopped to exchange pleasantries with this family. She obviously knew them from some other time. Duffy saw the bunny and whined. The mom looked down at the dog as they continued on their way, "Get the bun, Duffy. Get the bun!"

continued on next page

MITCHELL (CONT.)

continued from previous page

"What's that mean, Mommy?"

She didn't answer immediately, but seemed to stop and think for a while. The boy stopped and looked up at her. "Back when Duffy was still a puppy, he used to chase around rabbits and birds. Believe it or not, Kyle, there used to be wild rabbits around here, and open fields. While he was chasing them, I would always call, 'Get the bun, Duffy!'" She seemed to remember that she was talking to her son and looked down at him. To the boy it looked as if her eyes were watery.

"Of course, now he's twelve years old and too old to chase anything."

"But, Mom, twelve's not old."

"To a dog, it is. In dog years, one human year is equal to seven dog years."

"Really? I wish I coulda been there to see the bunnies and stuff."

"You were, son, but you were still a baby. You don't remember it."

"I'm not a baby anymore, though, huh, Mommy?

Another pause before she spoke. "You will always be my baby, Kyle, no matter how old you grow. Even when you are an adult and you have moved away, you will still be my baby." The water in her eyes that the boy had spotted earlier spilled over her cheeks.

Chagrined, the boy spoke. "But, Mommy, I'm never gonna move away from you."

"You will, Kyle. But for now, we are together and we can be happy about that."

Kyle didn't know it at the time, but this was a conversation that he would remember for the rest of his life, one that would stay with him and one that he would contemplate and think about many a late night. They came to the next corner on their block. It was a house with an elevated brick boundary enclosing the lawn. The boy's mother pushed the stroller with her right hand and extended her left to her son. He grasped it and hopped up onto the wall. They walked around the house, with the boy traversing the wall as if it was a great adventure. At the end of the wall, the boy released his mother's hand and jumped down.

"I did it myself, Momma!"

"You did great, Kyle," she said, as she thought, "You're already trying to be more independent." Mom and son smiled at each other and continued towards home.

When they reached the house, Katherine was asleep and she continued to sleep when her mom picked her up from the stroller and carried her into the house. Kyle was left on the porch with Duffy and the stroller. It was dusk now, and the sun was only a purple smudge on the western horizon. He sat down in one of the two wooden chairs on the porch. Duffy padded over and lay down at the boy's dangling feet. Kyle reached down and scratched the dog between the ears. The dog's leg started to twitch with pleasure.

With the setting sun, the evening was becoming cool and the boy enjoyed the breeze on his bare skin. Kyle looked to the beautiful purple coloring to the west and remembered the day. During their walk, it was if the thing at school had never happened, but now, sitting here, it floated back into the boy's head.

"Why can't it always be like that?" he wondered. He thought of the walk and what his mom had said when he told her he would never leave her. "You will, Kyle, but for now we are together and we can be happy about that."

Kyle wondered why she thought he would ever leave her. He thought of having to leave her and he felt a horrible sense of loss. Yet, it also hurt to know that he was the cause of some of the fighting between his mother and Aunt Janice. He didn't understand why they couldn't just share him and love each other as much as they loved him. Again, despite what Lily had told him, he wondered if things would be better if he were gone. "I wish we could just stay on our walks forever," he thought aloud.

He wondered if Lily really wanted to help or if she was just doing what Mr. Morales wanted her to do. He liked Lily and he thought she liked him. She asked him to do things instead of always telling him to do things. She was not like other grownups. She said she wanted him to trust her, and even though he didn't want to admit it, he was already starting to. She asked a lot of questions, though, and that made him a little uncomfortable. "Huhhhhhhhhhhh," the boy sighed.

"Kyle! Come on in and put Duffy in the backyard for me, all right?"

"Okay, Mom!" he shouted.

The boy got up, patted the dog's head, and then led him through the house into the backyard. He replaced the board in the track and locked the door. His mother said he used to hit Duffy in the head with a hammer, but he didn't believe he would do that. She was just teasing him.

He found his mom brushing her teeth in the bathroom and he joined her. She already had his toothbrush ready with his favorite toothpaste.

That night the boy and his sister slept peacefully throughout the night. No loud voices disturbed them and no vulgar words roused them from their dreams. The night passed with no more disturbances than a late night call of nature.

JAMES
Chapter Five
Wednesday: Three Weeks Later

"Kyle, what about you? Have you got anything to add?"

"I think that when people get mad, they don't think as much," he said.

"Yeah," Alejandro, one of the older group members, said.

"You're right," Lily praised. "Emotions will take over your thoughts, if you let them. The key is to always think about what you are going to do before you do it. As you all know by now, just acting without thinking can get you into all sorts of trouble."

As always, Lily was impressed by Kyle's insights and his ability to grasp the concepts she threw at him. He was becoming a real asset to the group. He had progressed from a shy, quiet member to one of the most actively involved members of the group. His presence also influenced the others to participate more. The group ranged from second to fifth graders, and though Kyle was one of the youngest in the group, he was also one of the most influential members.

Alejandro, the child who had agreed with Kyle earlier, was a fifth grader who was one of the other most active participants.

"Very good, guys. I'm very impressed with your insights and your ideas. You all have really good things to contribute, to add to this group. Michael, I'd like to hear from you some more. You have a lot to offer, you just need to speak up. Well, I'll see you all next week."

As one, the group stood and started filing out the door. As Kyle walked by, Lily grabbed his shoulder. He stopped and turned to face Lily. "Can I talk to you really quick, Kyle?"

"Sure," he replied.

"I'm not going to be able to see you this Friday. I'm taking it off to spend a long weekend with my parents in Sacramento."

After a slight pause, the boy replied, "Okay."

"I'm glad you understand. Anyways, how are your friends doing with the fighting?"

"They still argue sometimes, but they haven't fought as bad as the time it gave me bad dreams."

"Good. I have talked to Mrs. White and she said you are doing well in class again, and that you are one of her star students when you try hard."

"Yeah, I guess," he said a little shyly.

"Well, I just wanted to tell you that I am very proud of you and that I am sorry I won't be able to see you this Friday."

"Okay. I hope you have fun."

"Thanks. I'm glad you understand. I'll see you on Monday. Have a good weekend."

"You, too. See ya!"

"A good kid," she thought to herself. "A really good kid underneath all the armor he wears." But there was something there, something lurking underneath the armor that he wouldn't show anyone.

Letter From LA County (Central) Juvenile Hall To Dwight Abbott

Mr. Abbott,

I have been here nine months, six days and 21 hours. My counselor let me read your book. I think I understand now. I won't be coming back. I have seven months left, and it's over. I'll be 18. Do you have any more books we can get?

Thank you,
Josh

DWIGHT ABBOTT/SUNMAN'S LIGHT

We doubt that any Beat writer ever has written more passionately than Dwight Abbott — Sunman's Light — about trying to keep the young generation that fills these pages week after week from following in his footsteps: from juvenile hall to the CYA and finally to a life in state prison. Not only has he penned the remarkable CYA exposé called I Cried, You Didn't Listen, (available at AK Press), but as he approaches the end of his life behind bars, he is desperate that you hear his message that you don't have to continue the life that keeps you imprisoned (both in your minds and in your bodies). One of the biggest pains of living inside a cell is not knowing who has heard your words or whether they have changed a single individual. Yet, as you will see from the very brief letter he received last week from a young man in Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles (where Mr. Abbott began his long and torturous journey through the system more than 50 years ago), he has been rewarded with the knowledge that he has had a positive impact on the life of at least one human being. The much longer piece, "How Wrong!" recalls how, like many of you, he was hard-headed as a youngster, and how everything might have been different if he only had listened to the voices of experience. Mr. Abbott shares his light with our readers from his final home at Salinas Valley State Prison.

How Wrong!

I am irritated by ignorance but I understand, knowing it intimately as it once dictated my every action… and eventually that I exist the rest of my "natural life" in prison.

Once I successfully waded through the gambit of games and settled in here, my home, I found it much easier to be honest in place of fooling myself, as we all so often do to ourselves. If I were asked, I would be the first to agree with my keepers that I should never be allowed back into society, that I have been far too long broke, cannot be repaired. Fact is, I doubt I ever had a chance after what I experienced inside the youth penal system, until recently known as the California Youth Authority.

So, what do I do? Spend what's left of my life placing the blame where it should go, much of it on myself, feeling sorry for my dumb ass? Maybe join 'em? Not in this life! I have nothing for them. Instead I will do my very best to write something here that, if you pay attention, will keep you from experiencing this fate of mine. As I make this attempt, please, everything else in your mind set aside for these few moments. Now, as you begin to read this, I ask you put as your only thought: I am the consequence, you will become me, if you fail to heed what I am writing here. Will you give an OG a little respect and do this? I promise I will do my best to earn it here.

I'll also do my best not to seem or sound "lame" here. I know if I am thought of as "not cool," as "an old man who doesn't know anything," no one's going to listen. You young men and women know what I'm talking about. The way I saw it at your age was, "Ain't no old man can tell me how it is."

From Whittier, Nellis, to Paso Robles, to Preston, "PSI," from where I went on to Deuels at Tracy, "DVI," a cocky SOB because I was so scared. Before I was eighteen I'd been stabbed, shot, and beat down. Instead of putting two and two together and coming up with four, I became obnoxiously stubborn, made more bad choices, and knew I was doing it! I was stuck on stupid.

Angry and confused, I made every fool mistake known to mankind, and thought I was one cool white boy doing it. I was so cool the other idiots were telling everyone I'm an idiot. I was strutting around like a male peacock in mating season. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, I knew more than God. Anyone relate to that?

Here I am fifty years in this cell, or another, stunned! I always feel a shock run through me whenever I think about what I have done to myself, all to be "accepted" by my peers and thought of as "cool." Had I stopped trying to impress everyone, myself included, and stopped reacting to all I felt was being done wrong to me by cutting my nose off to spite my face, I could have brought to an end my then months of incarceration, and gone on to live my life in the free world, instead of existing for these years inside the toughest prisons California has to offer.

One, two different choices, choices I knew all along were available to me, and I would not have experienced any of this: daily, standing around, set on the balls of my feet in the event something kicks off, waiting for my cell door to be unlocked so I can escape all the madness. Being told what I can do, how to do it, and when, by guards often themselves angry men and women young enough to be my grandchildren.

Except for the "grandchildren," sound familiar? Can you relate to this? Of course you do. All of that does not change just because you get older and come here. In fact it intensifies many, many, times. Exactly what I could have done when a young boy in crisis to forever remove the shackles from my wrists and ankles? To not have reached a time, as all here eventually will, when I became the only one of my family and loved ones who remembers I am in prison? Could I have done anything differently?

If I had it all to do over again, knowing what I know today (how many times you heard that one?), you can bet your, whatever, the first thing I would do is recognize a boy with a "homie" is a boy with the gallows rope around his neck, grasped by homie's hands who has been given the choice to spring your trap, or to take your place. There is no way I would have trusted homie had my back, my best interest in his heart. If I did, I certainly would not allow that trust to make me incapable of recognizing my enemies and the depth of their treachery.

Second, I would have said "no thank you" once I began to suspect the homies were having no problem with their conscience drawing me deeper into the homie/gang mentality, violence, and drugs. I would have refused to be herded along, a lamb being led to the slaughter, by another punk-kid I allowed to make my choices and decisions for me. No matter as young as I was, I knew damn well there does not exist a friend who would deliberately lead me to a bad place, and I still went for it! I had to be retarded!

It's the oddest damn thing I did: I would not listen to Mom, I would not take orders from Dad, but I would walk down the street, or when I was in Juvenile hall/CYA, and follow the orders of some other kid who often did not know half of what I did. He would tell me how it was going to be, and how I was going to carry myself, and I'd do it. How does that work? How much sense does that make? Then I came to prison and there was the shot caller waiting for me… Am I missing something?

"Has this lame laid down, lost his heart?" That's where you would make your 607th mistake. Though old and tired, if to survive another day means I have to put you into a cardboard box, I will not hesitate. There is no sugar in these pants I am wearing. In my heart there is hope you will not continue doing what you do, being a number. There is my hope you will not come here where the rules for you to this point are going to change, "rules" you could never imagine in your wildest of thoughts. You come here to my house you will abide by the rules, and do exactly as you're told. In fact you will be much more obedient here than you are to your shot callers there.

One of those rules dictates, even if you arrive here with but a few years to serve, a knife be placed into your hand and that you make a hit, kill the man you are ordered to. "Bones in, bones out." Because of our strict, no-give rules, it has become a statistical fact, no matter you may originally come here with only a few years to serve, the odds are against you ever leaving prison, except in a box. But so what, that's "cool." Right? It's for "the 'cause," the homies, right? "They got my back, don't they? "Wrong!

Nobody can tell you the right choices are the easiest to make. I won't. Fact is you will be forced to go through some difficult times and changes among your peers as a man who "refuses to go along with the program." But it will be for only a matter of weeks, months. Considering the alternative is the rest of your life, "weeks and months" are nothing. Take your licks and get on.

With all the above said and done, I assure you it's from my heart; I'm not seeking brownie points. These folks can kiss my white butt. I just don't' want them on yours, no matter it's color.

As I have stated there is only one way out of here for me, and now I'll share I am close to that time. If I am here this time next year, that will prove how terribly bad my luck is.

I am no different from the other thousands passing before me. A dying man always wants to make things right. His conscience is working him over and he would like to make peace with it.

I believe sometime before I have shared that as I edge close to the inevitable, I am forced to consider the possibility there is a hereafter; my imagination summons up this ghoulish spectacle of being greeted below by my victims, nightmare figures in various stages of decomposition, reaching out toward me as I approach, animated by the thought they shall at least inflict their vengeance.

Should anyone, even if only one, write The Beat and share that what I have written here, or in other works, has moved them to conclude turning their lives over to others is not the way they want to go, and they intend to change that, I be eternally grateful as you will make this life I have lived and my death to have been not for nothing.

Closing, I wish for each of you to experience that which is a true measure of your life: May you step into a room filled with people, from all walks of life, who stand respectfully in greeting knowing you to be honorable and worthy of their respect and trust. Much, love, much respects. Good luck to you all.

MANUEL ***We usually hear great things about the Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania, where this next writer is sending this array of poems from. But like with everything in life, there are two sides to this coin. He gives us the ugly side to the coin in a few of his several poems. Some are about love and the trials and tribulations that come along with that emotion while others are about his days in the hall. He's made his journey to a whole 'nother state, but has continued to keep his journey through writing a part of ours as well. We'll leave you with a great quote from his poem, "A Day In The Hall." "It's still too early to sleep, so your mind drifts to the streets and all that you left behind. You think about your family and if your punishment fits the crime. These are the type of days that we in the hall face. You hear the click of the door again and your day begins the same." Well, hopefully his day will be a little different when he receives this latest issue with his piece in our most cherished Beat Without section."***

Meeting Someone Special

We met each other in class
When I asked to borrow a pen
You smiled and said sure
And started looking in your bag

I asked you what your name was as you answered I told you mine
Then we shook hands for the very first time

You helped me with math problems that I couldn't seem to understand
We built a little friendship but it only stayed in class.

I wanted to know more
About this beautiful girl I met
So I asked you for your number
Knowing I didn't have a chance

You told me no but only because your parents were very strict
I said oh it's cool thinking it's just some excuse
Two weeks past from that moment and you handed me a number
You said it's your new cell phone and I could call whenever.

I smiled and said I'd do that
I dialed your number when I got home
But was quick to hang up when I heard the ring tone

Thinking to myself what the hell is wrong with me
Just call her but then I think now
She's way out of my league

Eventually I built up the courage and called your cell phone
We started talking for minutes then they turned to hours
We got to know each other and would both call one another

I liked what was going on and the relationship we built together
From that moment on I knew I wanted to be with you forever
My wish almost came true until I got in trouble
I hurt you so much something I said I'd never do
I left you in the dark for 18 months of time.

I told you I was sorry knowing it won't get you back
If I told you that a million times
I really am sincere about everything I say
I learned to speak from the heart not just hollow lies from the brain.

I'm going to tell you one last time that you're the one for me
I love you with all my heart and want you to be with me.

A Day In The Hall

Taking a deep breath
As he wakes up for another day
The click at his door
Means it's time to get his tray

Already starting to stress
Because he knows the day's schedule

Hygiene's coming up
Then it will be time to hit the classroom
Same old teacher there
Expecting homeboys to do the work.

Instead they stay talking
While counselors are feeling urked
Giving people hours
Sending homeboys to their rooms

Contraband is found
By the staff that's searching beds
Nobody giving ownership
To the small piece of lead

Lunch is finally hear
Time to go back to the room
Thinking about your girl
And what she's up to

Wanting to get sentenced
As a court date comes near
But all they do is continue it

Your anger builds up fast
And you start to get mad
A tear starts to shed
But you wipe it away fast

Going back to the unit
With our hands behind your back
Thinking about what happened
In the last five minutes that passed.

You go straight to the courtyard
To play handball with the homies
They asked you what happened at court
But all you can say is nothing.

They tell you don't trip bro
It happens to the best of us
You say yeah I know
And leave the conversation
To rest

Your hour comes to an end
So it's back to your room for now

You show respect to all the homeboys then take it straight down
Your day comes to an end when you lay down in your bed

It's still too early to sleep
So your mind drifts to the streets
And all that you left behind

You think about your family and if your punishment fits the crime
These are the type of days that we in the hall face
You hear the click of the door again and your day begins the same.

Your day comes to an end when you lay down in your bed

A Vision

Days and days pass while they turn into weeks
It's been a couple of years since I was caught on the streets
Sent away far — actually to the other side of the map
Wishing away my time so I could finally go back
I see the golden state in my dreams at night
Just waiting for them to wake me up
So I can catch my plane flight
I know there's people waiting for me to come home
Especially my girl she makes me feel like a king on my thrown
These thoughts got my head spinning only a couple more months
To all locked down just keep your heads up.

Another Dream

A twinkle in her eye when she finally seen him home
A girl that was so happy to hear her boyfriend's tone
He was no different with a look that only she could give him
Tears of joy filled his face giving her a kiss without a moment to waste
Holding his love with so much passion
Not wanting to let go for an instant
Telling her he loves her and she doing the same
Being in each others presence forgetting about the pain
Just loving every feeling that is being expressed
It's time to get up Manuel and he awakes from his dream
Into an environment of stress
Where he cannot see his girl again until he goes back to bed

A Path That Was Taught

An older brother making a path for the younger brother to follow
He led him to a field of violence with no hope for tomorrow
An older brother showed him the way to wear his pants and hair
He showed him how to fight and no matter what never be scared
An older brother living the life he was taught to live
By older generations the life that they taught him
An older brother charged with an assault with a deadly weapon
Pleading guilty to the charge and also taking gang enhancement
An older brother watching the younger brother go down for the same crime
But this time it's different they want to give him a lot more time
The younger brother looks up to the older brother for help
The older brother says sorry you have to figure it out yourself
As the older brother sits there thinking about what he's done
He led another family member to the system a system that's no fun
He tells the younger brother he's sorry for what he's done
By leading the wrong path he put him in a messed up situation
He can't do his younger brothers time for him
But he can change his path to a better way of life
So he tells his brother this and he says
If you do good for me then I'll do good for you
That's a pact made by two brothers a relationship that grew.

MANUEL (CONT.)

Erasers

Erasers are the nicest things of that there is no doubt
We write wrong words a few quick swipes and big mistakes fade out
And you will find erasers of a very different kind
Extremely helpful if you will try to bear these facts in mind
When you bump someone in a crowd and almost knock her down
A soft I'm sorry may bring smiles and rub out that old frown
Apologies, invariably obligate mistakes
And three small words I love you can erase the worst heartaches.

Before It Is Too late

If you have a tender message or a loving word to say
Do not wait till you forget it but whisper it today
The tender word unspoken, the letter never sent
The long forgotten messages, the wealth of love unspent
For these hearts are breaking for these some loved ones wait
So show them that you care for them before it is too late

Still Loving You

Catching the light of the stars above
Looking at the picture of the only girl that I love
Holding hands and blowing kisses
Smiling and laughing damn I miss this
Thinking of all the good times we had
Wishing I had a time machine to go back in the past
Wondering what you're up to and if you're thinking of me
But I know you are you told me so in my last dream
As the sky starts to lighten and the sun starts to show
A tear falls from my eye because I'm thinking about my girl
I hear her voice in the wind and smell her scent in the air
Only if I could tell her how much I still care.

BUGZY ***Since Santa Clara Juvenile Hall does not permit the Big Beat into their institution, our readers often miss out on some of the best writing we publish. The following piece, "Modern-Day Slavery" is just such an example. Some pieces are so good, so powerful, so carefully thought out and crafted, that we would be cheating our readers if we restricted them only to those writers in that facility. Bugzy, who can clown with the best of them, can also be as deadly serious and profound as any writer in The Beat. Besides the intricate rhymes and images he lays out here, we are struck by how clearly he describes the false promises that have seduced so many children into this world of modern-day slavery! It is a destructive trap that each new generation seems to fall into. Perhaps, by taking his role as teacher seriously, Bugzy can not only free himself from this deadly trap, but also prevent other children from falling into the same trap.***

Sinister Visions

I close my eyes and drift off into a cold, dark, gloomy place
Each figure around me is evil and sinister, without a distinguishable face
Sirens blaring off in the distance; gunshots all around
Silent screams of terror and pain, dismembered bodies on the ground
Walking, trudging through a pool of blood and several bullet casings
Adrenalin pumpin' through my veins; my heart Nascar racing
Past the pool of blood was a streaming old wishing well
I took a deep breath and looked down, and was face to face with hell
Greeted by flames that engulf my body until I was bleeding bone
Satan smiled at me and told me to make myself at home
Condemned to eternal suffering, and surrounded by grotesque visions
Asked myself, "Why did I make such evil demonic decisions?"
Smell of death assaults my senses and I'm surprised at what I see
My homies and my family condemned to eternal fire with me
Bodies without arms or legs sinisterly stare at your body parts
Having many thoughts of ripping your body clearly apart
Flashbacks of my past from when I died, to by birth
Looking at the chaos that's happening on hell on earth
Bodies piled bleeding and left twisted exactly where they lay
Waves of blood in the ocean, in the water we once called the Bay
Killings left and right, body organs in the street gutters
Cannibals slicing open bodies with knives and cookie cutters
High-speed chases on a highway; dodging body parts, skulls and bones
Satan invading the world and snatching humans outta their homes
Loud explosions erupt in the direction that I'm facing
Mushroom clouds in the sky and waves of radiation
Swarms of locusts buzzing overhead, announcing the evil plague
Radiation starts taking toll on everybody's legs
The sun turns red, with the face of Satan in the middle
Announcing everyone on earth is dead, in some kind of riddle
Laughing with a sinister tone; fire scorching from his skull
Raining blood form the heavens, branding all the helpless souls
Babies crying for love, but they do not know what's wrong
No one to care for them; they don't know what's going on
I look to my left and see my loving mother cry a scream
Then I wake up in a cold sweat, and realize it was just a dream

Modern-Day Slavery

Can anyone tell me why
I gave my childhood adolescence to the system
Private life invaded by authority figures,
whose first words are, "Frisk 'im"
I've chosen to believe an illusion,
and accepted the fact that I've been deceived
Being locked up earned respect and love;
well, so I was led on to believe
Robbed of my childhood by an illusion,
whose objective was to make me fail
Believing written words were emotions,
and loving material things like mail
Got into a habit of being a slave to elders,
whom I do not know nor care for
Accepting defeat when the time comes,
because there is no way to settle the score
Being a slave in this modern-day slavery
tends to degrade any living man
Being told when to piss and shhh,
and accepting a fluorescent light bulb tan
Tend to lose your color when you live confined
under many bright lights
Life turns routine and you obey all your wrongs,
and accept your rights
It's a lose-lose situation
when you choose to give up your life to the state
Always under supervision
while the judge and DA seal your fate
Surrounded by men who all claim to be hard
and will be down to ride
Too much of one thing gets old;
that's when several personalities collide
Longing for the touch of a woman
and the scent of her beautiful hair
You realize that when you wake up,
neither woman nor scent is there
Just a rerun of yesterday's festivities
of conversing several war stories
Being labeled a category;
still claiming you have the balls, guts, and glory
Day after day, you suddenly get accustomed to the infamous jailhouse living
Still claiming to be innocent, waiting for the comforting words,
"You are forgiven"
Always in denial—that's when you know that you have developed a criminal mind
Stuck battling good from evil,
while your heart starts getting entwined
Waiting to be served like an animal by guards who become your masters
Controlled like a puppet on strings,
dancing to a beat that goes faster and faster
Not eating what you want,
you have to eat whatever it is that you get
The system is like our owner, and we are his vicious little pets
Doing time away from family;
stressing 'bout their daily life situations
Family be shedding tears
when they hear how many years you be facing
Smiling at the judge, when he decides the verdict is "Guilty"
You are raped of several years;
feeling depressed, old worn, and filthy
Several visions go through your head; you decide to hold a grudge
Thinking to yourself,
"Who the hell is this person trying to judge?"
Shackles bound around ankles,
wrists and waist, everywhere you go
Big balling to hard timing, now what is it you got to show
Robbed of your pride to be a man, now you belong to the state
Wishing you can go back in time, but realize it's too late
No longer counting days, you now count calendars and seasons
Asking God, "Why…?" I know He has a list of several reasons
Release date comes and you are set free into a vicious storm
Not knowing how to function,
there is no way that you've been reformed
An invisible leash around your neck,
that prevents you from literally leaving
Thinking you are free, but it's really an illusion you are perceiving
Day in and day out, you have to deal and accept all your losses
Wake up in the morning, so you can just repeat the damn process
Losing pieces of your mind slowly, and blackening your soul
I promise that this way of living will eventually take its toll
Now look back on how many years to the state it is you gave
All the shhh you've done now has made you a modern-day slave

Reasons For My Actions

Of all the things I envy about you, I have to say your attitude is what intrigued me the most. 'Till this day I still don't know where it comes from, blind-siding me like a lobster caught in a fishers net, that wasn't there moments ago. I hate to say it but at times I enjoyed your tantrums. I enjoyed the fact that I was the one who got to hold you and console you after an altercation. It may sound selfish to some, but it made me feel superior or in another word heroic.

Knowing that no matter how strong my queen was, she still needed her knight to be by her side. Not to be mean in any way, but to prepare you. Preparing you for a future that might not have me in it the way you hoped I would be. Preparing you to be strong because things happened and situations change. We all have choices to make, good ones, awful ones, but some are made because of stupidity. An ignorance I didn't know existed inside me until it dawned on me, but my recognition was too late.

Believe me, I understand why you're angry with me, and you have every right to be. I realize now that there's nothing I could've done to prepare you for what you're going through now. I was doing the unnecessary because I wanted to give you the world, but in reality all you really wanted was me. I love your moods now more than ever, because every-time you scream or yell in my direction, I know you still care. That you still love me, and I wouldn't have it any other way. It's my reasons for loving you.

but my recognition was too late.

RASHEED SMITH ***We're sure many of you know who Stevie Wonder is. Well, if you don't, he's one of the greatest entertainers of all time. And if you know him, you definitely have heard the song, "Ribbon In The Sky." This week this next writer plays off of that concept, by using the opposite effect. Sometimes things aren't all 'ribbons in the sky' when it comes to love because love can hurt and force us to resent those very same ribbons we once adored. He then begins to speak about things that are as peaceful as the water's ripples when a swan gently lands on the surface. This writer is an excellent poet and really captures the moment... we hope to hear from him again soon. He's writing from the Pennsylvania Department Of Corrections in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania.***

Escape

I am trying to runaway,
Flyaway, just to get away from whatever keeps me confined.
No matter how hard I try, or how fast I run,
The conclusion is I am still trapped inside a shell.
Imprisoned by so many things but the inferior point is yet to come. Extraordinary amounts of pain
And misfortune keeps alive my daydreams of escape,
But my nightmares bring me back to reality,
Serenading in my mind as a constant reminder.
Every time I get away I convince myself that I am in a better place
But it's a meta-morphis that tricks me into believing.
Only revealing itself as the same hell I've always known.
It's like being reborn every moment you awake,
Except you remember your torment in your previous lives.
Unable to obviate your kismet, unable to do anything.
Wanting to be able to be free.

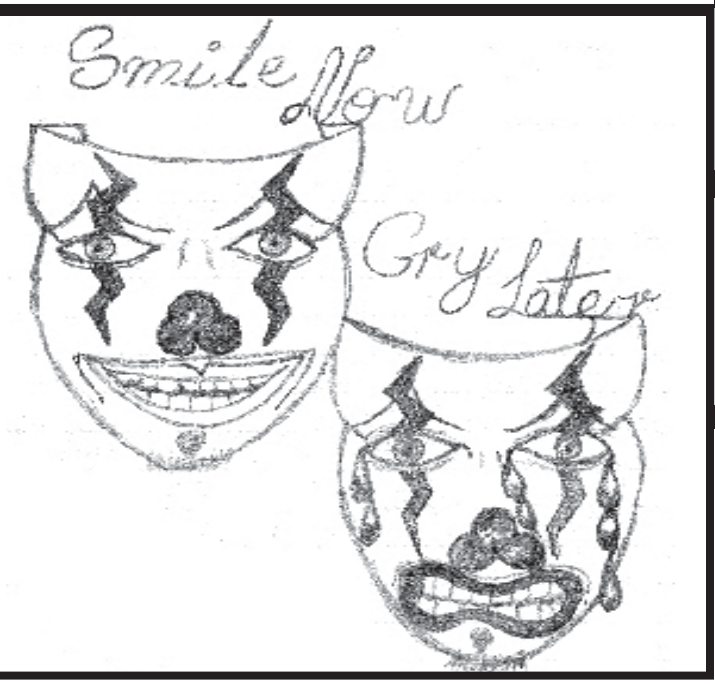
Swan

Peacefulness is a word commonly used but lacks fulfillment. Every living thing has its own interpretation of the meaning. Now where the confusion lies is, which one is accurate? Who's to say that your lifestyle is just as peaceful as a lions? Inside our pupils, it's a ferocious beast that mutilates other living creatures, but in the lion's eyes all he sees is today's main course.

Who's to say that it's without tranquility? Also if we say this about their species, what do you think the topics are about when they conversate about ours? Peacefulness to me is a state of mind; it's like a beautiful swan tangent to the waters surface, just floating, without a worry in the world. For a few it's accomplishable, and some will attain it within short spans, but all of earths beings will never achieve it as a whole. Not because we don't want to, because something is absent from our inner selves. That someone is stronger than anyone, or thing could imagine.

Ribbons

I once heard "Stevie" sing there was a ribbon in the sky.
It must have been for your love, because it sure enough wasn't mine. The feeling, I remember doesn't come rapped in ribbons and bows, Instead it comes down hard like thunderous blows,
Possessing you, stronger than any spirit or demon
Then it disappears in thin air, without even telling you it's leaving.
An intrust between two people, that's bound to go awry.
He's too short, she's too heavy,
And you have to be opulent to catch my eye.
So many complications, love is just that, why do we look for more. Instead we search for the flaws, and envision the perks,
Before we open that mystery door.
Does anyone think of the person getting hurt in the process.
Why do feelings have to die?
The pain is unexplainable to the point were excruciating is a compliment,
That's why I don't look up. I try to avoid the ribbons in the sky.



It's a lose-lose situation
when you choose to give up your life to the state
Always under supervision
while the judge and DA seal your fate
Surrounded by men who all claim to be hard
and will be down to ride
Too much of one thing gets old;
that's when several personalities collide
Longing for the touch of a woman
and the scent of her beautiful hair
You realize that when you wake up,
neither woman nor scent is there

read the rest of Bugzy's BWO piece on page 50